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I. *Aim:* The aim of this quarterly shall be to provide a forum (1) for the discussion of Christian faith and life on the basis of the Lutheran confession, (2) for the application of the principles of the Lutheran Church to the changing problems of religion and society, (3) for the fostering of world Lutheranism, and (4) for the promotion of understanding between Lutherans and other Christians.

II. *Policy:* The editors will welcome contributions that are likely to be helpful in the furtherance of the aims set forth above. It will be required of such contributions that they be frank and fair in their discussion of moot questions; that they be free from controversial animus; and that their contents be of real scholarly and practical value to the readers. Difference of opinion between contributors, or between a contributor and the editors, does not of itself exclude articles from publication since the editors do not hold themselves responsible for the opinions of contributors.

THE LUTHERAN QUARTERLY

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The Unity Which We Seek

By Otto W. Heick

AS A SPIRITUAL body, the church is the workmanship of the Holy Spirit, who through the Gospel calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the true faith, as Luther says in the Small Catechism. The church, therefore, is not the sum total of individual believers or of local congregations. Rather, the latter are manifestations of the one church in space and time.

This holy assembly and congregation of saints, under one head, even Christ, is of "one faith, one mind and understanding, . . . one in love, without sects or schisms."[1] Outside of this Christian church there is no Gospel, and where the Gospel is not there is no forgiveness, nor can there be sanctification."[2]

However, in addition to being the workmanship of the Holy Spirit, the church is also the workshop of the Spirit of God. This institutional aspect of the church is expressed in Article VII of the Augsburg Confession: the church is the congregation of saints in which the Gospel is rightly preached and the sacraments rightly administered. The church is the place where the Gospel is proclaimed through the Word and sacraments. It is not only the assembly of saved people, but it is also the place where, and the instrument through which, people are saved. The personal and institutional views of the church are, therefore, intrinsically intertwined in Lutheran theology.

This one, holy church is to continue forever,[3] for the Word of God cannot be without the people of God. Through the Word and the sacraments, "as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who worketh faith, where and when it pleases God, in them that hear the Gospel."[4] The continuity of the church is a matter not of organization, but of faith, just as the unity of the church is maintained not by uniformity of ceremonies but rather by love, both faith and love being the gift

1 *Large Catechism,* Article III, 51.
2 *Op. cit.,* 56.
3 *Augsburg Confession,* Art. VII.
4 *Augsburg Confession,* Art. V.

of the Holy Spirit. What conclusions are we to draw from such an understanding of the nature of the church?

The first and most important fact is this, that, basically speaking, the unity of the church has never been disputed by Lutherans. The church has always remained one, for there is only one God, one Lord Jesus Christ, and one Holy Spirit. As a matter of fact, the church cannot be divided. No man can ever dissect the Body of Christ or tear apart the workmanship of the Holy Spirit.

Since there is but one Christ, the message about him is one. The Gospel cannot be divided either. In a nutshell, this message is contained in such a passage as John 3:16. The Roman Church does not have a Gospel different from that of Protestantism, or vice versa. The churches may—and, if fact, are—divided in their understanding and interpretation of the message, but the message itself is one: "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners" (I Tim. 1:15). However, the disunity of the church is also a painful fact of history and Christian experience. And it is precisely this state of affairs which the ecumenical movement wants to overcome. What, then, shall we do? What is the unity which we seek?

From the Lutheran point of view, the unity which we seek is not identical with, nor even contingent upon, uniformity (1) of doctrine, (2) of organization, and (3) of ritual.

I

It may seem strange that a Lutheran should disclaim unity of doctrine as a prerequisite of church unity. Nevertheless, I am serious in making this statement, believing it to be in conformity with the Scriptures and with Luther.

There are two Greek words which correspond with our expression "doctrine," *didache* and *didaskalia*. Of these two, the latter is never used in the Gospels to designate the teaching of Jesus. However, it is a favorite expression in the Pastoral Letters. The teaching of Jesus, on the other hand, is expressed by the word *didache*. According to the investigation by Karl Heinrich Rengstorf,[5] *didache* designates the teaching of Jesus not as a system of dogmatics or ethics which he presented to the people. Jesus was not a professor of theology. Rather *didache*

5 Kittel, *Wörterbuch*, I, 166 f.

defines the teaching of the Lord as a proclamation of the gracious, saving will of God. In teaching the people he proclaimed the Gospel. *Didache* is a religious term, not a theological one. As such it takes precedence over *didaskalia,* which signifies the *didache* of Jesus as handed down by an apostle or his successor to the second or third generation of Christians. *Didaskalia,* therefore, is the apostolic theology of the *didache tou Iesou.* The Pauline or, if you will, the deutero-Pauline *didaskalia,* however, is not the only theology found on the pages of the New Testament. There are also a Johannine and a Petrine *disdaskalia* in the New Testament whose terminology in many ways is strikingly different from that of Paul. All of us are agreed, I am sure, that the term *dikaioo* is very fundamental to the language in which Paul proclaimed the Gospel. It is found no less than 14 times in Romans, 7 times in Galatians, while of the two passages in I Corinthians only one is significant (6:11) from the soteriological point of view. The same is true of the two passages in the Pastoral Letters. Only one (Tit. 3:7) refers to the justification of the sinner by the grace of God. Apart from the Pauline literature, the term is limited, in the epistolary literature, to the well known argument of James about the justification of Abraham. Likewise, the noun *dikaiosis* is limited to Paul. This means that neither John nor Peter ever taught the justification of the sinner. But does this imply that they never preached that man is saved by the deed of God in Christ? To deny this would be sheer nonsense. All three apostles, then, proclaim the same *didache,* yet have a different *didaskalia.*

A similar distinction between the Gospel and theology may be observed in genuine Lutheran teaching.

I have had occasion to refer to Article VII of the Augsburg Confession in which it is asserted that the church is "the congregation of saints in which the Gospel is rightly preached and the sacraments rightly administered." The use of the verb "preached" in my translation is quite intentional. The traditional English translation has "taught." It follows the Latin text, but the German text, which is after all the official text, reads: "Die Kirche ist die Versammlung aller Gläubigen, bei welchen das Evangelium rein gepredigt und die heiligen Sakramente laut des Evangelii gereicht werden." The *doctrina evangelii,* therefore, is, in the eyes of Melanchthon, a proclamation of the Gospel, not a system of dogmatics.

Let me add another illustration. While all Protestants admire Luther at Worms in 1521, few, if any, outside the Lutheran Church —and, indeed, not even all who are in the Lutheran Church—regard him with wonder or pleasure at Marburg in 1529. Here, they say, a quarrelsome theologian obstructed a possible unification of the Reformation movement. But is this interpretation correct? Did Luther at Marburg actually confuse—and hopelessly at that—the Gospel and theology? A careful study of his most important treatise on the Lord's Supper, the *Grosse Bekenntnis vom Abendmahl,* 1528, reveals that he did not. In this writing, in which he elaborately developed a philosophico-theological foundation for the doctrine of the real presence, he explicitly states that he does not want anyone to regard his arguments as absolute. He merely intends to combat the arrogant spirit of Zwingli, who rejected the doctrine of the real presence as impossible. Man cannot lay down any rule for Christ, Luther maintains. God and Man are one person in Christ. "But *how* this is possible we do not know." "Whether or not God has some other modes of being present than the ways described by me," Luther says, "I do not want to deny." The reality of the real presence is, in Luther's eyes, not conditioned by his own philosophical argument. Even here, the fact and its interpretation, faith and theology, *didache* and *disdaskalia* are not the same.[6] Uniformity in doctrinal statements is not absolutely necessary for unity. We do not seek this kind of unity.

II

The next two points, uniformity of organization and of ritual, we may consider together since they have often been linked together in efforts to unite divided churches.

The argument over organizational unity is chiefly centered about the problem of a ministry whose authority can be traced back in unbroken succession to the apostles. The "Catholic" position on this subject is well known. It needs no further elucidation. A few critical remarks may suffice.

Was the apostolic church actually an organizational unity following the same pattern of ministerial offices and of church ritual? No argument advanced by our Catholic friends has ever been strong enough

6 *W.A.,* XXVI, 336; cf. pp. 318 f., 336.

to convince us Lutherans on this particular point. We are not persuaded to believe that the Jewish and Genile congregations of the apostolic age regarded themselves as an external organizational unity controlled by an ecclesiastical hierarchy. Rather, the oneness of the church was seen in the fact that every baptized believer was regarded as a member of that body of which Christ is the head, or was considered to be a brick in that building of which Christ is the cornerstone.

Nor can we Lutherans find any biblical authority for the statement that the apostles delegated their office to the bishops as the latter appear in the second century, or that by any legitimate process the priesthood as it emerged in the post-apostolic age has its roots in the presbyterate of the apostolic age.

Unfortunately, the word "priest" is a frequent source of confusion. To be true, it derives from the Greek *presbyteros,* elder. But the New Testament has two separate words for elder and priest. They do not mean the same thing at all, and the New Testament never confuses them. The New Testament word for priest is *hiereus.* It uses the term, on the one hand, to establish what is known as the priesthood of all believers (I Pet. 2:4 f.; Rev. 1:6; 20:6) and, on the other hand, the priesthood of Christ (Hebrews). But Christ has neither demitted nor delegated his priesthood to a particular order of the clergy. "There is nowhere in the New Testament the shadow of an allusion to a Christian priest in the ordinary sense of the term."[7]

We Lutherans feel that the Catholic doctrine of apostolic succession is foreign to the pages of the New Testament. We admit that the twelve apostles, Matthias having taken the place of Judas, together with St. Paul occupied a special place in the early church. But the New Testament apostolate was a much wider group than the twelve plus St. Paul. Apollos (I Cor. 4:69), Barnabas (Acts 14:14), Silvanus and Timothy (I Thess. 1:5) qualify as apostles. In II Cor. 11:4, 5 Paul speaks of some "superlative apostles," who are nevertheless false apostles (cf. Rev. 2:2). But the test whether or not a man was a true or false apostle was no such thing as valid ordination. The only criterion applied by Paul is the Gospel which these men preached. "Doing the work of an apostle is the proof of an apostolate."[8]

From our point of view it is significant that nowhere in the New

7 *Chicago Lutheran Seminary Record,* July 1952, p. 10.
8 *Op. cit.,* p. 21.

Testament is an apostle called a bishop. While the apostles were still alive, other men served as bishops. The New Testament bishops therefore were not the successors of the apostles. The apostolate was a charismatic function. But the New Testament contains no such idea as that the apostolate, like any other charismatic function, will come to an end. The Catholic idea that the apostolate is continued in the church through a succession of bishops, validly ordained, is entirely foreign to the New Testament.

This view of the episcopate is also found in Luther and the Lutheran Confessions. By divine right the power to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments is common to all who have been called to the ministry of the church, whether they are called pastors, or elders, or bishops. And when the regular bishops become enemies of the Gospel, the churches retain their own right to call, elect, and ordain ministers. Consequently the bishop of Rome is not by divine right above other bishops and pastors. The Wittenberg Reformers were ready, *de jure humano,* to retain the ecclesiastical order of the Western church, provided the papacy permitted the Gospel to have free course, for the true unity of the church is a matter not of external organization but rather of faith and love.[9]

Even less support can Lutherans give to the idea of a uniform liturgy as essential to the constitution of the church. The New Testament knows nothing of a typed function perpetually to be performed by certain orders except Christ's ministry in the heavenly tabernacle. Uniformity of ceremonies is not the unity which we seek because it is not essential to the true unity of the church.[10] This fact notwithstanding, the history of the Lutheran Church offers some striking examples of such misguided attempts to unite the church on the basis of order and liturgy. I shall briefly discuss two such ventures of the past.

The first attempt is associated with the names of Daniel Ernest Jablonski, Reformed chaplain of Frederick I, first king of Prussia, and of Gottfried Leibniz, devoted servant and friend of the royal house of Hanover.

In 1701 the electorate of Brandenburg was to be elevated to a kingdom, the Kingdom of Prussia, and the elector, Frederick of Hohenzollern, was to be crowned king. Anticipating this event, Jablonski and

9 "Appendix" to *Smalcald Articles.*
10 *Augsburg Confession,* Art. VII.

his friend Leibniz became interested in the restoration of the historic episcopate in German Protestantism. The prestige of the new king required that his coronation should proceed according to the established precedence of other monarchs. "No bishop, no king," so the saying went, and since there were then no bishops in German Protestantism, both men felt that the time was favorable for the restoration of the episcopate. In addition, they felt that Lutherans and Calvinists could possibly be drawn together by such a venture. Hence Jablonski agitated for his election as bishop of the Moravian Church in Poland, to which position he was actually elected and consecrated. Now the elector had a bishop in "apostolic succession" for the coronation. But Jablonski wanted more. His ultimate aim was the restoration of the historic episcopate for the whole church of Prussia, both Lutheran and Reformed. However, he realized that the consecration of a bishop requires, according to custom, the assistance of three other bishops in apostolic succession. For this reason he began to establish contact with the Church of England. Likewise the Book of Common Prayer was to be introduced in a German translation into the church of Prussia.

Then another political event gave rise to the keenest hopes of both Jablonski and Leibniz. The British Parliament had elected the Electress Sophia and her legal descendants to succeed to the throne of the United Kingdom. (The new queen of Prussia was the sister of George I.) What an inspiration for ecumenically minded people this event happened to be! As elector of his German possessions the new sovereign would be the *summus episcopus* of the Lutheran Church of Hanover, as king of Great Britain "supreme head of the Church in England." Already under Queen Anne a Lutheran chapel had been established at the court of St. James in deference to the religion of her husband, Prince George of Denmark. When the chaplain, the Rev. Mr. Mecke, an orthodox Lutheran whom the prince had brought along from Denmark, objected to the prince's taking Communion with the queen in the Anglican Church, Mecke was removed and replaced by Wilhelm Anton Boehm, a Lutheran of the Halle school of Pietism. The services in the court chapel were conducted in the German language but according to the order of the Book of Common Prayer. This served as an additional stimulus to the union plans of Jablonski and Leibniz. But the plans failed. While the king of Prussia was quite ready to have the Book of Common Prayer introduced in his realm, he was not quite so

fond of the idea of bishops in apostolic succession as rivals to his own episcopal authority over the Lutherans and Reformed in Prussia. In a letter to his mother-in-law, Electress Sophia, the king wrote in 1703, "At my coronation we needed a bishop to perform the ceremony of anointing. Hence I had to create two bishops for this occasion, and I appointed Mr. Ursinus and Dr. Sanden to this office; and I find nothing wrong with the English liturgy, wherefore I will introduce it here, omitting however a few Catholic ceremonies." A year later the king wrote, "Some may think that I have no power to create bishops and that the English bishops are successors to the apostles, which cannot actually be proved. But I do this by virtue of my regal power, just as the ancestors of Your Electoral Grace used to do. When your father was elected king of Bohemia he, too, created some bishops, and I don't care a bit whether or not the Anglican bishops will recognize my Ursinus, for he will never see England anyway. . . ."[11] Titular bishops, yes; but no bishops in apostolic succession. The autocratic Calvinistic king had no intention to relinquish his grip over the church in his realm.

One hundred forty years later, however, the situation was entirely different. In 1840 Frederick William IV ascended the throne of Prussia. He was a deeply religious man, a child of the Romantic Pietism of the nineteenth century. Unlike his father, who bestowed the episcopal title lavishly upon faithful servants of the king, the son had a high conception of the independence of the church. Much of the misery in German Protestantism, he said, was due to the fact that the German churches had lost the apostolic episcopate. The king approached the archbishop of Canterbury in this matter. Yet his conception of the episcopate was actually not that of the Anglicans, but rather that of the post-apostolic age, which regarded the bishop as a *primus* among the presbyters, all of whom were in succession to the apostles. But the king is mainly remembered in church circles for his hand in the establishment of an Anglo-Prussian bishopric at Jerusalem.

In the late thirties of the nineteenth century Egypt, with the moral support of France, tried to wrest Palestine and Syria from Turkey. At the request of the latter, the powers of Europe, with the exception of France, came to the rescue of Turkey and forced the Egyptians to withdraw behind their own frontiers. The aspirations of the Crusaders could have been realized once more. But the powers failed to act, leaving

11 Ernst Benz, *Bischofsamt and apostolische Sukzession im Deutschen Protestantismus* (Stuttgart, 1953), 43.

the Christians who had supported the Egyptians at the mercy of the corrupt and fanatically Mohammedan officials of Turkey. This situation stirred the king of Prussia to action. He felt that something ought to be done for the sake of Christianity in Palestine. So he conceived of a Protestant bishopric at Jerusalem to be established in cooperation with the Church of England. In April, 1841, he sent his newly appointed ambassador, Baron von Bunsen, to London with a document which has been called the most important ecumenical document of the nineteenth century. The proposal of the king put the church and government of England in a peculiar position, for to consecrate a bishop who was not necessarily a British subject and who was not to labor in a country belonging to the British Empire was an unheard of novelty for both church and state. It required special action by parliament. Forthwith a bill was passed in the fifth year of the reign of Queen Victoria, October 5, 1841. According to the arrangement, England and Prussia were to propose the candidate for the Jerusalem see. The king of Prussia was also to present to the bishop, for ordination, such candidates of theology who were to be sent to Palestine as pastors of German Protestants or as missionaries among the Jews. It was explicitly stated that only candidates should be sent to Palestine, not pastors who had previously been ordained in Germany. In this way the idea of re-ordination by an Anglican bishop was evaded. At the time of such an ordination the candidate was to be asked to subscribe neither the Thirty-nine Articles and the Book of Common Prayer nor the Augsburg Confession. No subscription to a particular creed or creeds, whether English or German, Anglican or Lutheran! The candidate was required only to pledge acceptance of the three creeds of the ancient church as belonging to ecumenical Christendom. Subscription to a particular creed was a matter to be regulated prior to ordination by the home church of a candidate. In a similar way, candidates for confirmation were to be prepared by the German pastor in Palestine, who was also to conduct the public examination of the candidates and to ask of the latter the customary confession of faith, while the rite of the laying on of hands was to be reserved for the bishop of Jerusalem.

Among the critics of the arrangement was Henry Newman. In his eyes the Jerusalem bishopric was the "ultimate condemnation of the old theory of the [Anglican] *via media.*" Lutheranism and Calvinism were to him heresies condemned long ago by both the Western and the Eastern church. To enter into fellowship with heretics on the

basis of apostolic succession, without requiring them to renounce their doctrinal errors, led him to the gravest suspicion "not that it [the Anglican communion] would soon cease to be a church, but that it had never been a church all along."[12] Having the apostolic succession was, according to his conviction, not enough for church unity. The Anglican Church might have it, but so had the Monophysites of old.

As a Lutheran I must side with Newman against the well meant efforts of the Anglican divines. The doctrine attached to apostolic succession is to us more important than the mere fact. To be or not to be in the alleged apostolic succession does not split the Lutheran Church, as may be seen in the case of the Church of Sweden, and the fact of this venerable claim does not establish the unity which we seek. History shows that apostolic succession does not prevent a church from becoming heretical, as Newman observed. But contrary to Newman, the Roman Church to which he turned is, in our eyes, the greatest heretical body among all Trinitarian churches.

Two other fatal, misguided attempts in which Lutherans played a part must be included in our review. Both were actually in the realm of doctrine, the one aiming at a reduction, the other at compromise. The former is associated chiefly with the name of George Calixtus, the latter with Friedrich Schleiermacher and another king of Prussia, Frederick William III.

Calixtus was professor at Helmstedt, a university in the duchy of Brunswick opposed to the formula of Concord. In a way he was a forerunner of Leibniz, referred to above, and of Molanus, abbot of the Lockum monastery, all of whom worked for a re-unification of Western Christianity on the principle of expediency. Distinguishing between fundamentals and non-fundamentals in the Christian religion, Calixtus believed "that to the fundamentals of the Apostles' Creed nothing of a fundamental nature can be added."[13] "The later, more elaborate creeds contain fundamentals only where the substance of that creed is repeated in practically identical form; wherever the later creeds offer interpretation and qualification of the Apostles' Creed, they no longer express fundamentals."[14] In this way he held the *consensus quinquesaecularis* to be sufficient for church unity. Consistently applied, this would mean that the anti-Nicene sects of the ancient church ought to be recognized

12 *Apologia pro Vita Sua,* edition of 1864, p. 248.
13 Neve-Heick, *History of Christian Thought,* Vol. II, pp. 3 ff.
14 *Op. cit.,* p. 5.

as fellow-believers, which is obviously impossible. Besides, the Apostles' Creed—in fact, all the creeds of the first five centuries—are more or less silent on the soteriological problem which is the main dividing line between medieval Christianity and the Reformation. Unity on the basis of the first five centuries is definitely unacceptable to the Lutheran Church. To seek such unity would mean to commit theological hara-kiri.

And now a third approach: doctrinal compromise. I have already had occasion to refer to the union policy of the first king of Prussia. Though successful for a century, the Reformed Hohenzollerns were favored in their endeavors by the spirit of Rationalism, which finally undermined the faith of the church. Under the theological leadership of Schleiermacher, the king used the occasion of the tercentenary of the Reformation, October 31, 1817, to proclaim a union between the Lutherans and the Reformed in his realm. The success and failure, repercussion and persecution that followed in the wake of the king's action, we cannot here discuss.[15] The compromise character of this union is marked especially by four factors: (1) Both the Lutheran Church and the Reformed Church were put under one and the same church government. (2) The names "Lutheran" or "Reformed" were dropped. Henceforth there was to be only one "Evangelical Church." (3) Luther's Catechism and the Heidelberg Catechism were put on the same plane as being officially recognized by the Evangelical Church of Prussia. (4) At the celebration of the Lord's Supper the words of distribution were changed from the Lutheran, "Take and eat, this is the body of Christ, . . . this is the blood of the New Testament," and from the Reformed, "This signifies the body of Christ," to the merely recitative formula, "Take and eat, Jesus Christ says, This is my body," etc. By implication the Union here declared itself non-committal as to the proper meaning of these words.

As an interesting and significant feature I may mention the fact that at the recent meeting of the executive committee of the Lutheran World Federation in Vienna, the Evangelical Church of Pomerania (one of the provinces of old Prussia) applied for and was accepted into fellowship with world Lutheranism, the interpretation being that today the Union is no longer a church but rather a federation within the Evangelical Church in Germany and that consequently each member

15 A well documented account is given in J. L. Neve, *The Lutherans in the Movement for Church Union* (Philadelphia, 1921), 110-137.

church of the Union has the right to re-establish itself on a confessional basis. This means that the union principle is defeating itself within its own organization. The unity exemplified by the Union of Prussia (and some other federal states in Germany), and on this side of the ocean by the former German Evangelical Synod of North America which merged in 1934 with the Reformed Church in the United States under the name the Evangelical and Reformed Church, is not the unity which we seek.

All three types of attempts to create a united church, as analyzed above, are doomed to failure.

With respect to the first approach, contrary to the Anglican communion, Lutherans base the apostolicity of the church on whether or not the message which it proclaims is actually in conformity with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Every church which has preserved and proclaims the apostolic message is truly apostolic, while a church which has departed from the apostolic message is unapostolic, even if it may trace its beginning to the missionary activity of an apostle. Pope Pius XII, for example, is not the successor of Peter because he happens to be bishop of Rome, entirely apart from the historical problem involved. Rather the apostolic Word is the criterion of any man's claim to apostolicity. The only norm by which we may determine what is necessary to the unity of the church is whether or not it will produce righteousness before God,[16] i.e., whether or not it is power essential to the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is the only question that counts. All other things—order, polity, ritual, observance of days, including the Christian Sunday—are adiaphora. To coordinate any of these things with faith is to detract from the honor and glory of Christ.

Second, in reply to Calixtus, we must maintain that Christianity is never a "retrogression, a reproduction, but a living and spiritual power."[17] "It is of course very important that we today appropriate the heritage from the undivided church of the first centuries," as Aulen says. But in the light of the original apostolic message, the Greek and early Latin Fathers are by no means faithful schoolmasters to bring us to the Gospel as preached in the New Testament. In part, their writings are anathematized by that apostle who wrote to the Galatians, "But

16 *Apology*, VII, 34.
17 G. Aulen, *The Christian Faith*, p. 434.

even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that we preached to you, let him be accursed" (1:8).

And finally, concerning the Union in Prussia, Hesse, and other German states, and similar unions in America as well, it is quite conceivable that Lutherans may have church fellowship with another church not subscribing the Augsburg Confession, for the church is larger than the Church of the Augsburg Confession. With malice toward none, I may say that Lutherans have never tried to convert people of other denominations to Lutheranism in the way in which Calvinism has tried, throughout its history, to swing the Lutheran Church of Germany over to the low Calvinism of the Heidelberg Catechism, either by an open renunciation of the Lutheran Confessions or by the union method. The Lutheran Confessions are ecumenically minded. In the Preface to the Christian Book of Concord the authors state that it is in no way their desire to condemn entire churches which are under the Roman Empire of the German Nation, or elsewhere. And the strong and at times harsh strictures of the Roman Church notwithstanding, the Lutherans, in addressing the emperor and princes at Augsburg, declared, "We all serve and do battle under the one Christ" and consequently "ought to confess the one Christ." *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus!* Yet the church is for us not identical with our own Confessional group. Rather, as Luther says in the Large Catechism, God "has a peculiar congregation in the world, which is the mother that bears every Christian through the Word of God." Hence, he continues, "I believe that there is upon earth a holy assembly and congregation of pure saints, under one head, even Christ, called together by the Holy Ghost in one faith, one mind and understanding, with manifold gifts, yet one in love, without sects or schisms."[18]

The unity which we seek in the church must reflect the unity which we have in Christ. It is not mere cooperation in externals. Our goal is expressed by no less a person than St. Paul himself: until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God (Eph. 4:13).

The way to promote unity, therefore, is theological. For it is the work of the theologian, as Aulen rightly says, not to keep alive the Confessional polemic of the past but rather to "understand Christianity and to apprehend the significance and meaning of the Christian faith."[19]

18 *Large Catechism,* Art. III.
19 Aulen, *op. cit.,* 435.

The Ecumenicity of the Lutheran Confessions

By Gerhard Gieschen

THERE IS something paradoxical about the subject which we are about to discuss. As it is formulated it poses for us a problem of semantics. What possible meaning can "ecumenical" have when used in connection with the Confessions of the Lutheran Church? For, with the exception of the three ecumenical creeds of Christendom at the beginning of the Book of Concord, the Lutheran Confessions are obviously particular creeds, and as such testify to a divided Christian church. By no stretch of the imagination can it be affirmed that all they teach has been accepted by the church *ubique, semper, et ab omnibus*. It may be readily admitted, perhaps, that the Vincentian formula was never anything more than wishful thinking and that it could have had even a semblance of reality only in a church which claimed infallibility for its official theological statements and had the external power and prestige to enforce its claim. But it is precisely this pretense of infallibility which is denied in the Lutheran Confessions. If they nevertheless claim to be speaking in the name of the Christian church, if they constantly affirm their "ecumenicity," it must be in another sense than that of agreement with universally accepted doctrines.

The question, indeed, arises whether we can speak meaningfully about "ecumenicity" in connection with the Lutheran Confessions at all. Not only do these writings symbolize a break with the prevailing theology of their day on many decisive points, but they stand to this day as a barrier against all syncretistic and unionistic efforts aimed at removing the schism in the church. It is certainly true that those outside the Lutheran Church have always regarded[1] the Lutheran Confessions as obstacles to church unity, and the pressure of Reformed polemics to induce the Lutherans to abandon some of their positions has never ceased. Loyalty to its Confessions has consistently prevented the absorption of the Lutheran Church in some amorphous and premature structure of universality and has led it in our day to insist on the confessional

1 John T. McNeill, *Modern Christian Movements* (Philadelphia, 1954), 138.

principle in so "ecumenical" a formation as the World Council of Churches.

If we propose, nevertheless, to speak of the ecumenicity of the Lutheran Confessions, it is obvious that the term "ecumenical" is understood on a deeper level than is usually the case. It does not mean, in the original sense of the word, adherence to an external church organization which claims spiritual domination over the whole *oikoumene;* "catholicity" is not understood as it is represented by Rome. Neither does it mean, unionistically, a superficial amalgamation of diverse elements in a super-church, world-wide in scope, in which all differences are submerged as inconsequential. On the other hand, it is manifest that the Lutheran Reformation was not separatist in principle. The reluctance with which Luther finally accepted the break with Rome is well-known, as is also his deep grief over the developing rift within Protestantism itself. And this is reflected in the Lutheran Confessions. In the words of Werner Elert, "Not the establishment of a new church is sought, not even—at least not primarily—the substitution of a new ideal of the church for the one which had prevailed hitherto, but the reformation of the catholic church to which the confessors reckoned themselves also to belong, and this within the limits set by the evangelical *Ansatz* and along the lines of the directives inherent in it."[2] While the reformation of the church was considered absolutely necessary and was carried forward with great determination, nevertheless there was something that needed to be conserved, something which the church had always possessed, and which needed only to be uncovered again and enthroned in the hearts of men and in the life of the church. The placing of the three historical creeds at the beginning of the Book of Concord, the consistent avowal of adherence to them in all the major Confessions, the patristic quotations which run through the writings and culminate in the catalog of testimonies at the close of the book: all this adds up to an understanding of "ecumenicity" and a whole-hearted affirming of it which is not accidental but basic. But what was that in which they knew themselves to be at one with the church of all times and places? What is the element of ecumenicity in the Lutheran Confessions? We shall seek to discover this in two fundamental and interrelated areas, (1) their understanding of the Gospel and (2) their understanding of the church.

2 Werner Elert, *Morphologie des Luthertums,* 2nd edition (1952), I, 179.

I

An attempt might be made, as indeed it has been made repeatedly, to seek the basis for ecumenicity in those articles of faith of which Luther wrote, "Concerning these articles there is no contention or dispute."[3] These embrace the confessional formulations of the first five centuries of Christian history, the *consensus quinquesaecularis* of George Calixtus. There would seem to be some justification for this in the fact that all the major Lutheran Confessions constantly refer to them as the basis of their claim to recognition as Christian. This procedure involves a distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental articles, agreement on the former alone being thought sufficient for church unity and ecumenicity. While it is true that the ecumenical creeds offer a kind of measure for determining the Christian character of any group and are a useful means of expressing the ecumenicity of the church in a general way, yet the attempt to make them the sole basis for church union is open to serious criticism. This criticism would concern itself with such matters as the arbitrary treatment thereby given to history; the unrealistic and purely academic manner in which faith is dealt with as simply intellectual assent; and the tendency to identify Christian truth with theological formulations.

But the most serious demurrers would arise from the fact that in such attempts that is lost sight of which for the Lutheran Confessions is the one matter of ultimate concern: the Gospel itself. This concern is manifest in all the writings, from the Augsburg Confession through the Formula of Concord. It expresses itself in various ways, but is never absent. It was this concern which precipitated the Reformation, and in the theological controversies which ensued it was crystalized in the articles of the Confessional literature. The articles about which the controversies were waged were considered important for the sole reason that they involved a presentation and defense of the Gospel. Where they are outspokenly polemical they deal with specific abuses and misrepresentations which tended to obscure and destroy the Gospel. This accounts for the increasing vehemence with which the position of the opponents was assailed, from the relatively irenic tone of the Augsburg Confession to the trenchant and theologically refined Formula of Concord. Concern for the Gospel breathes through the superb argu-

3 *Smalcald Articles,* Art. I.

mentation of the Apology and through the deceptively simple and unpolemical Catechisms. But nowhere is it more succinctly stated than in the Smalcald Articles.

Here Luther deals in the Second Part with the office and work of Jesus Christ, or our redemption, which he calls "the first and chief article." After quoting four cardinal passages from the Bible dealing with redemption, he goes on: "Now, since it is necessary to believe this, and it cannot be otherwise acquired or apprehended by any work, law, or merit, it is clear and certain that this faith alone justifies us, as St. Paul says, Rom. 3:28: For we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law. Likewise v. 26: That he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Christ. *Of this article nothing can be yielded or surrendered,* even though heaven and earth, and whatever will not abide, should sink to ruin. For there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, says Peter, Acts 4:12. And with his stripes we are healed, Isa. 53:5. And *upon this article all things depend which we teach and practice* in opposition to the pope, the devil, and the world. Therefore we must be sure concerning this doctrine, and not doubt; for otherwise all is lost, and the pope and devil and all things gain the victory and suit over us."[4] This, accordingly, is the one point that could not be relinquished; everything else was considered important only because of its relationship to this Gospel.

It is interesting to note that Luther in the further development of this part of the Smalcald Articles deals with such subjects as the mass, the invocation of saints, chapters and cloisters, and the papacy. Taken by themselves, these might be understood to be issues on which there could be a legitimate difference of opinion which would not necessarily involve the essence of the Christian faith. This appears all the more strange when we go on to the third part, introduced by the words: "Concerning the following articles we may treat with learned and reasonable men, or among ourselves," and then note that the subjects included here are sin, the law, repentance, the gospel, baptism, the sacrament of the altar, the keys, confession, excommunication, ordination and the call, the marriage of priests, the church, justification and good works, monastic vows, and human traditions. All these are articles on which endless theological debate has been expended; differences of

4 *Smalcald Articles,* Second Part, I, 4, 5.

opinion on some of them would seem to be fatal to any real unity in the church. Indeed, they would seem to be at least as closely related to the central concern for the Gospel as those listed under Part Two. And yet these wide areas are opened up to theological discussion within the church, while in the second part similar subjects are included under the article which could not under any circumstances be surrendered. Even granting that the Smalcald Articles were not intended as a systematic presentation, this arrangement is puzzling. Do we have here an attempt to separate the articles of faith into two groups, the essential and the non-essential? A careful reading of this writing will show that this is not the case. In his treatment of the articles in the Third Part, Luther proceeds exactly as he did with regard to those in the Second Part. In all of them he is concerned that the Gospel shall not be obscured, or, as Article II of the Augsburg Confessions puts it, "the glory of Christ's merit and benefits." It is not the papacy as such, not the differences in doctrine on numerous points as such, but the Gospel, which is thereby placed in jeopardy, which is important. Therefore, Luther can say of all the articles indiscriminately in the closing paragraphs: "These are the articles on which I must stand and, God willing, shall stand even to my death; and I do not know how to change or to yield anything in them. If anyone wishes to yield anything, let him do it at the peril of his conscience."

There is only one Gospel, and that is the one confessed and proclaimed here and in the entire Book of Concord. If there is agreement on the meaning of the Gospel, all other matters can be discussed among "learned and reasonable men." This Gospel is the Word of God *kat' exochen*. It is the content of the whole Bible, especially of the New Testament. It is the "doctrine" of the apostles, coming down in the church through all vicissitudes of time. Expressed in different modes within the New Testament itself and with even greater variations by the Fathers, it is yet that one and self-same Gospel which the church cannot yield or permit to become corrupted if it wishes to remain Christian. Here is the ground for true ecumenicity. All who hold to this Gospel of the free grace of God in Christ are to be received as brothers. Differences of interpretation in detail, variations in presentation, can be tolerated if there is a willingness to submit all human opinions to the judgment of the Gospel itself. Here we have no rigid denominationalism, no effort to canonize as infallible a particular formulation.

Here the Lutheran Church has always been open, in principle, to continuing conversation with brethren who differ with them on details. The Formula of Concord, which has so often been the whipping-boy of those who insist that the Lutheran Confessions are an obstacle to ecumenicity, after declaring that the Scriptures alone have ultimate authority, and after confessing adherence to the ecumenical creeds and the earlier Lutheran Confessions, states succinctly concerning these: "But the other symbols and writings cited are not judges, as are the Holy Scriptures, but only a testimony and declaration of the faith, as to how at any time the Holy Scriptures have been understood and explained in the articles in controversy in the church of God by those then living, and how the opposite dogma was rejected and condemned." Even though in this last of the Lutheran Confessions scholastic method and dogmatic intellectualism threaten to overshadow the pristine immediacy of the understanding of Gospel and faith, yet there is never a doubt that here, too, it is the purity of the Gospel itself which is being defended and upheld, not individual doctrines as such. It was inevitable, perhaps, in time of controversy that greater and greater attention should be given to details and fine distinctions, and as a consequence the impression could arise that denominational differences were concerned only with these details. As an illustration we might use the controversy between Wittenberg and Geneva on the Lord's Supper. It could easily appear as though the difference concerned only a mode of interpreting the "real presence," regarding which opinions might legitimately vary. And yet, involved with this difference is the whole Christological question, and therefore also the soteriological question, i.e., the understanding of the Gospel itself.

The peculiar pathos of the Lutheran position arises from the fact that, on the one hand, the oneness of the Gospel is earnestly affirmed and all are looked upon as brethren who confess this Gospel, even though they may hold differing views on details, and that, on the other hand, since every doctrine must be judged by the Gospel, unity must be denied to the extent that doctrines are held which tend to destroy the Gospel. What destroys the unity of the church is not the fact that there are differences of opinion due to the limitations of human understanding, but the perversion of the Gospel. Thus the Apology (Articles VII and VIII) makes a distinction between "certain unprofitable opinions which nevertheless, because they do not overthrow the founda-

tion, may be forgiven . . . and corrected (the holy Fathers testify that sometimes even they built stubble upon the foundation, but this did not overthrow their faith)" and such "errors which overthrow faith."[5] Absolute unity of theology, while desirable and always to be sought earnestly, is by no means considered essential for Christian unity; what is essential is that the church have "one Gospel, one Spirit, one faith, the same sacraments; we are speaking, therefore, of spiritual unity."[6] To the extent that this is the case, the ecumenicity of the church is a reality. It is a unity which we know only by faith. But since the church is not only a spiritual and invisible reality but also a visible reality in space and time, in which the Gospel is declared and confessed and in which the understanding of the Gospel is not always equally clear and the confession not uniformly expressed, it is necessary, when comparing the several contending groups, to look upon the statements in which they have set forth their understanding to determine whether the teaching corresponds to the Gospel. The Lutheran Confessions not only do not claim inerrancy; they invite to constant re-examination in the light of the Gospel itself as it speaks from the Scriptures. They offer themselves to the whole church as the Lutheran understanding of the Gospel, which is in principle open to correction, and invite the church to share this or, if it cannot do so, to show where the Lutherans do not properly express the Gospel. They are confident that in their concern for the Gospel they are at one with all true Christians, the church of the past as well as that of the present.

Thus the Lutheran Confessions do not preclude discussion by positing themselves as absolute. Rather they are an important contribution to the continually unfinished task of theology: the understanding of the Gospel and its presentation in speech for the contemporary environment. Both, the full apprehension of the Gospel and the realization of true unity, are goals which lie always in the future; in the language of St. Paul, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:12). It is true that, in the time of Lutheran Orthodoxy and under the influence of a scholastic methodology and an intellectualized doctrine of inspiration, statements were sometimes made implying that Lutheran doctrine

5 *Apology,* IV, 20, 21.
6 *Apology,* IV, 30; German text.

is infallibly correct and that practically identified the Confessions with the Gospel itself. But the Confessions themselves make no such claim. They do insist that they are a witness to the Gospel which has always been found in the church, that they have eliminated certain abuses and misrepresentations which would destroy that Gospel. Of one thing they are sure: "To the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of *the Gospel* and the administration of the sacraments."[7]

To the attainment of ecumenical unity the Lutheran Confessions are dedicated. The alacrity with which the conciliatory invitation to Augsburg was accepted is reflected in the Preface to the Augsburg Confession:

> That concerning dissensions in the matter of our holy religion and Christian faith . . . the opinions and judgments of the parties might be heard . . . and considered and weighed among ourselves in mutual charity, leniency, and kindness, in order that, after the removal and correction of such things as have been treated and understood in a different manner in the writings on either side, these matters may be settled and brought back to one simple truth and Christian concord, that for the future one pure and true religion may be embraced and maintained by us, that as we all are under one Christ and do battle under him, so we may be able also to live in unity and concord in the one Christian church, . . . we have promptly come to Augsburg and (what we do not want to say as boasting) we were among the first to be here.

While these high hopes were not realized, and while the cleavage became greater rather than less, the conflict more bitter, and the fragmentation of the church more extensive, still, as Hans Asmussen[8] has recently pointed out, behind all the Lutheran Confessions lies the yearning that "as we all are under one Christ and do battle under him," the church might find its way back to an understanding of the Gospel which would bring the several factions together "to live in unity and concord in the one Christian church." To this end the Confessions were devoted, even the theological labors which produced the Formula of Concord: to bring about true unity on the basis of the Gospel. To this end they frankly and fearlessly assailed those teachings and practices in the church of their time of which they were convinced that they destroyed the Gospel and therewith the true basis for Christian unity.

7 *Augsburg Confession,* Art. VII.
8 Hans Asmussen, *Warum Noch Lutherische Kirche?* (Stuttgart, 1949), 324.

For it has always been the lie, not the truth, which created dissension and destroyed community.

II

If there is only one Gospel, which is the ultimate concern of every Christian, then it is evident that there can be only one church. For it is the Gospel which creates the church. The church is "the holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of their shepherd";[9] it is "the congregations of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the sacraments are rightly administered."[10]

Wherever the Confessions deal with the church, the same dialectic appears which is involved in their understanding of the Gospel; the tension between faith in the one Gospel, on the one hand, and the form of this faith as confessed in the official doctrines of the several groups within Christendom, on the other. That there is only one "holy, catholic, and apostolic church" is affirmed. This is the church in which the Gospel is proclaimed in Word and sacrament, through which, "as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith, where and when it pleases God, in them that hear the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ's sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake."[11] This is, on the one hand, the church in its "invisible" aspect, the *ecclesia stricte dicta.* On the other hand, however, this is also the *ecclesia large dicta,* the "visible" church as an outward phenomenon in which, "in this life, many hypocrites and evil persons are mingled."[12] That the church is present is perceived by the circumstance that in a specific, visible group of people the Gospel is being concretely proclaimed in Word and sacrament; what is invisible is the faith which this Gospel creates. Its marks are not any specific degree of holiness in its members, nor any particular form of organization, nor the presence of any special rites or ceremonies. It is always both an invisible, spiritual and a visible, empirical reality.

This view involves the peculiar difficulties of the Lutheran position. Lutherans cannot accept the Roman view which identifies the out-

9 *Smalcald Articles,* III, 12.
10 *Augsburg Confession,* VII.
11 *Augsburg Confession,* V.
12 *Augsburg Confession,* VIII.

ward church, under its visible papal head, with the church itself. But neither can they admit that the church is a purely "Platonic" spiritual body and therefore in its very nature invisible. To borrow a word from anthropology, the church is a psychosomatic reality. It is here that the ecumenicity of the Lutheran Confessions meets its severest test.

At first sight it may seem that on this view there is an unusual degree of openness in this position. Those questions which so often have led to the fragmentation of the church play no important role here. First, there is here no legalistic and literalistic insistence on conformity with a form of the church allegedly set forth in Scriptures, no debate on the question of episcopacy, presbyterialism, or congregationalism, as the pristine patterns which the church must follow if it would be the true church. The same absence of legalism applies to rites and usages, of which it is stated, "Nor is it necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike."[13] Second, there is no effort made here to set up a degree of moral purity which must be attained by the members of a church before they are recognized as part of the true church. It is openly admitted that, where the church is found in this life, it is bound to be a *corpus mixtum.* The church is very much *in* the world, even though it is not *of* the world. Word and sacrament, even if administered by evil men, are nevertheless efficacious. The danger of secularization must be met from within the church, by the preaching and application of Law and Gospel, not by an endless process of separation. Third, as we have already seen, there is considerable toleration even toward those who hold doctrinal views differing from those of the Confessors, so long as they do not affect the Gospel itself. In the otherwise so sharply polemical Smalcald Articles, in which Luther deals severely with the mass as an abomination and dangerous human invention, he can say, "If, perchance, there were reasonable papists we might speak moderately and in a friendly way, thus: first, why they so rigidly uphold the mass, for it is but a pure invention of men. . . . Secondly, it is an unnecessary thing, which can be omitted without sin and danger."[14] Even the Formula of Concord, in dealing with the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, contents itself with giving a thorough and detailed historical, exegetical, and doctrinal exposition of the Lutheran teaching,

13 *Augsburg Confession,* VII.
14 *Smalcald Articles,* Part Two, II, 2.

followed by a listing of opposing opinions, introduced by the words, "Accordingly, with heart and mouth we reject and condemn as false, erroneous, and misleading *all errors* which are not in accordance with, but contrary and opposed to, the doctrine above mentioned and founded upon God's Word."[15] There is here nothing to justify the statement of John T. McNeill that the Formula of Concord "regards its own articles on the Lord's Supper as terms of communion."[16] Even differences in individual doctrines do not necessarily destroy the *Una Sancta,* as little as the presence of other sins and imperfections in the church.

But it would be a serious mistake to assume that this openness is the same as indifference. The entire Book of Concord is a testimony addressed to the whole Christian church regarding adulterations and perversions of the Gospel which could prove fatal to the church and which, for that reason alone, had to be energetically combatted, even at the cost of outward unity. It is not to their own faith that Lutherans are committed in loyalty, but to the Word of God itself. In the church, as it now appears on earth, it is possible that errors arise. These must not be condoned or defended, but must be corrected under the impact and in the light of the Gospel itself. Here there must be no confusion between the true church, in its invisible and spiritual aspect, and the church as it appears historically on earth. Here, also, there must be no confusion between the inner ecumenicity and unity of the church of Christ and the outward appearance of ecumenicity in the form of intercommunion. These two do not necessarily coincide. And in this connection it is correct to say that consensus in the doctrine of Holy Communion can become "the necessary condition of intercommunion."

Dr. McNeill is undoubtedly right when he says, "Lutherans have always guarded the inviolability of their official doctrinal statements." But this resistance of Lutheranism to compromise is not based, at least not in the Confessions, on a lack of desire for ecumenicity but on the conviction that true unity is possible only in the proper understanding of the Gospel. The understanding which any church has of the Gospel is publicly declared in the various doctrines it holds. The teaching concerning the Lord's Supper is such a doctrine. Intercommunion would involve for Lutherans the public assent to a doctrine they cannot accept, because it places in question some of the basic factors of the Gospel

15 *Formula of Concord,* Solid Declaration, VII.
16 McNeill, *op. cit.,* 139.

itself. There is here no implication that false doctrine makes of the sacrament not a sacrament, for the sacrament rests on God's deed and promise. There is here no implication that those who hold defective views of the sacrament are not Christians or cannot be members of the *Una Sancta.* Lutherans accept as valid the Baptism performed in accord with its institution by those who hold views differing from their own, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant. Likewise, the validity of the Lord's Supper is not dependent on the doctrines held concerning it. But Lutherans cannot normally participate in a Communion service in a church which holds different views concerning it without thereby publicly affirming something which they hold to be a betrayal of the Gospel. As long as we are not really one in our understanding of the Gospel as it is publicly declared, we dare not give the false impression that we are. The sacraments stand in such close relation to the Gospel context in which they are used, and their effectiveness depends so largely on this Gospel context, that the one cannot be affirmed without also affirming the other.

For the sake of the Gospel the Lutheran Confessions are ready to accept an outwardly divided church. This does not mean that Lutherans must be indifferent to the inner drive in the church to seek fuller expression for the unity which it has in Christ. There is nothing in the Lutheran Confessions that would prevent us from patiently seeking to establish increasing areas of understanding of the Gospel in which we know ourselves to be one with other parts of the church, not only among Protestants but also with non-Protestants. As we have indicated above, the Lutheran Confessions are not sectarian in character in the sense that they are addressed merely to a restricted body of adherents. They are, on the contrary, meant as a constant proclamation to the whole church, a *kerygma,* not for the sake of contentiousness but for the sake of the Gospel itself. On the one hand, we distinguish in them those aspects which are historically conditioned from those which are basic to the Gospel itself. On the other hand, we recognize that the positions held by those outside the Lutheran Church may be in the process of modification in some respects, and where this is in the direction of a clearer recognition of the Gospel we rejoice in it. But we hold no utopian hopes regarding a unification of the church. Such unification remains a continuing task, one to which we must address

ourselves with the same zeal as the Confessions themselves did, and to which they still address themselves.

In affirming this ecumenical task the Lutheran Church will keep in mind that no doctrinal formulations, even its own, can ever claim to be a perfect presentation of the Gospel. It is, in fact, not feasible to conceive of the Gospel simply in terms of formal knowledge. The Gospel is always the living Word of God, and the human testimony of this Gospel, produced by the operation of the Holy Spirit, is always historically conditioned. It carries its validation purely within itself, although it is not a matter of indifference how it is formulated. A thought-provoking word of Asmussen may be quoted in this connection:

> We find ourselves in a blind alley if we take the Christian testimony to be primarily a body of concepts and cognitions. We cannot avoid doing this, too, but it dare not become the essential and basic understanding. The Christian testimony is at every level the symbol of Christian life and vitality, i.e., of the Christ who was made flesh and now lives by the Spirit in the church among his own and in his own. He has taken for his own those who bear witness, the entire church, and he has given himself to them as their own. The word of the church and of the witnesses whom he sends is his own word. This word is given its characteristic form by the individuality of the witness and by the eternal and temporal existence of the Son of God. This fact explains how and why the one word of God can be so diverse.[17]

This insight will make us wary of the assumption that the final formulation of the Gospel can be found in our Confessions. We shall recognize that the Confessions, too, are the Word of God spoken in a specific historical situation by a specific group of Christian witnesses. There is no absolute standard of doctrine to which the church can be made to conform outside of the living Gospel which comes to us in the Scriptures as it speaks to the church in every generation and calls upon those then living to bear witness to its truth and power. "In the Scriptures we encounter at all times that eternal life by which we, too, either come to life or burn out into eternal judgment."[18] As Lutherans we understand the Gospel in the perspective indicated by the Confessions; this is our historical place, given to us by God. But this perspective cannot be an absolute norm which claims to set forth in advance what is Gospel.

17 Asmussen, *op. cit.*, 10.
18 *Op. cit.*, 11.

The merit of the Lutheran Confessions is this, that they recall the whole church, including ourselves, continually to the Gospel as the only Word of Life, which alone is able to give life and lead into the truth. Loyalty to the Confessions means primarily loyalty to the Gospel as the life-giving Word which speaks to us authoritatively in the Scriptures; it is not primarily concerned with a specific doctrinal principle or theory of the Scriptures (*Lehrbegriff und Schriftprinzip*), nor with Scriptures as a norm for doctrines. "First and foremost the Scriptures are the means of grace by which the fire is kindled which Christ came to enkindle."[19] Only in a derived and secondary sense are the Scriptures a "doctrinal norm."

From this it follows that all judgments passed by the Confessions on the teachings of other denominations are, in the final analysis, not concerned with establishing a greater or lesser degree of Truth.

Even if an ecclesiastical Confession were to reproduce the biblical complex of ideas in perfect measure, yet it could not be valued as the equivalent of the Holy Scriptures. Therefore the question which soon made its appearance, whether a Confession is binding because (*quia*) it agrees with Scripture or in so far (*quatenus*) as it does so, is ultimately wrongly put. For the truth is not a more or less; the truth is the presence of Christ in the Word. Where it happens that Christ is present in the Word, there is the truth. Concerning this fact the church in its symbols passes judgment, not concerning all sorts of "correct" or partly correct statements. Therefore the Confessions of the church are, as symbols, signs whereby one may know where, according to the Christian witness, Christ is to be found and where, on the other hand, one may not expect to find him. There is, of course, also a place in the church for the other understanding, which is aware of varying quantities of truth. Different works on dogmatics are good in varying degree according to the measure in which they get near to the truth. But this distinction has only derivative value. The first question is not concerned with varying quanta of truth, but with the witness they bear of Christ, since I am summoned by every work on dogmatics to judge whether it presents Christ [*Christum treibet*]. This decision deals with the quality of the truth in question, although I cannot avoid judging the quantity also. But it is a questionable procedure to confuse the two. The first question to be asked of the Lutheran Confessions is whether they breathe life of the same life which sustains me. The question regarding their conformity to the cognitive content of Scripture is a very complicated one—but of a secondary rank.[20]

19 *Op. cit.*, 11.
20 *Op. cit.*, 15.

It is clear that the separation of the Lutheran Church from other Christian bodies can never be an absolute one. It is incumbent upon us to recognize that Christ can be present despite the presence of teachings which we cannot accept. We are responsible for the truth which has been revealed to us by the living Word; this revelation has a history of which we know ourselves to be a part. And whatever of truth we may charismatically be able to convey to others, we must seek to share with the whole Church. Ecumenicity, then, is not something over which we may dispose; it is an integral part of being in the *Una Sancta*. This is the urgent concern of the Lutheran Confessions. On the other hand, this affirmation of ecumenicity demands of us that we listen humbly and patiently to voices outside our own ranks; for it may be that the Spirit of God has a word for us from among them also. Under the conditions of the sixteenth century Luther no doubt had to say regarding the Roman Church, "We do not concede to them that they are the church, and they are not; nor will we listen to those things which, under the name of church, they enjoin or forbid."[21] And while this is our position even today with regard to the claims of absoluteness made by the papal church, nevertheless that does not mean that many things have not changed since that day, precisely as a result of the Reformation, and that today the situation may demand that conversations be resumed. No doubt the Formula of Concord accurately describes the situation as it existed in 1580 between Lutherans and Calvinists, and the testimony there given was needed. But it would surely be unhistorical to assume that the situation is in all respects the same today as then. Here, too, changes have been taking place, largely as a result of the historical and biblical research of the past 150 years, and certain epoch-making events during the last fifty years, which make it possible to approach the differences that lie between us from a new angle and with deepened insights, give promise that renewed conversations may lead to a greater mutuality of understanding regarding the Gospel than at any time during the past 400 years. The Lutheran Confessions contain nothing that would stand in the way of such renewed search for unanimity in the interpretation of the Gospel. Any rigidity which Lutherans might be tempted to exhibit in these efforts must be put to the account of other factors. We are most loyal to our Confessions if we take up the exacting task of a theological restatement

21 *Smalcald Articles*, Part III, XII.

of the Gospel which they so passionately declared and defended. We, too, must make our contribution to the ecumenicity of the Christian church in a positive way in our day, even as the Confessions did in theirs. While the final resolution of the divisions in the church is certainly eschatological and awaits the day of the coming of our Lord, when there will in very deed be "one flock and one shepherd," we must be as earnestly concerned as were our fathers "that as we are all under one Christ and do battle under him, so we may be able also to live in unity and concord in the one Christian church."[22]

22 *Preface to the Augsburg Confession.*

Preaching the Law

By Alvin N. Rogness

IT MAY be difficult to preach the Gospel in such a way that the forgiven sinner is ushered into the sheer ecstasy of the love of God. It is also difficult to preach the law in such a way that the unrepentant sinner is undone, knows nowhere to turn, and is thus ready to hear the Gospel. Most difficult of all, however, is to preach the law to Christians who live in the false comfort of their own progress in sanctification. These people, Sunday after Sunday, need to be thrust back upon their own abject unworthiness to become candidates afresh for the joy of redemption.

The late Professor David Swenson, eminent Kierkegaard scholar of the University of Minnesota, said, "I remember once to have remarked in conversation with a colleague that there were two kinds of religion: one for good men and one for bad ones; and that I needed the latter kind." If the preacher conceives that he has before him a group of nice people who have come to achieve nice things for their nice community, then surely the worship will achieve no vital encounter between men and God. Man is not a nice creature. He is a fallen one, a rebellious one. However much he has received of the grace of God in the new man, he is also "the old man" full of self-deceit and pride. He cannot be treated as a good chap until the good work which God has begun in him will be made perfect, and that occurs only after death. Until the end, he will need to be brought under the law. The commandment must strike him, his sinfulness must be brought again and again to light, and over and over again he must die. This is a part of the daily renewal in the life of the Christian.

Sin has some real stature. It is the deep depravity, the stubborn rebellion, and the stark indifference of man to God. It is the entrenched egotism which at best will surrender only fractional sovereignty to God. It is the twisted mind which whimpers or boasts its rights and credits before God. It is the self which refuses to die. To bring this self to dissolution and death, the law must be preached with such incisiveness and depth that no one in the pew can escape.

From my youth I recall that much preaching was directed against the quintet of evil: dancing, drinking, smoking, card-playing, and movie-going. I lived in a small homogeneous community without a theater and had therefore been quite unexposed to most of these fearful transgressions. Moreover, ninety per cent of the congregation could sit through such exhortations and bask in the comfort of conjuring up pictures of the "worldly" people who were not there. In Woodruff's little book, *Plato's American Republic,* a satire on American life, Socrates is made to report on his recent lecture tour to the United States, and is asked by one of his disciples whether or not there was not some hope for America among the preachers. Socrates replies that the preachers are under the control of the manufacturers, who have ordered them to preach against such things as drinking and gambling because the manufacturers have discovered that after a night of such carousal the men do not handle the levers and switches well. But, adds Socrates, the preachers are never known to raise their voices against the prostitution of the soul known as salesmanship.

To be sure, the law must be applied to concrete situations in life, and the preacher is under mandate, as shepherd of the flock, to point out the pitfalls for the sanctified life. But that which may be a pitfall to one may not be so for another. That which characterizes great preaching of the law is the application of God's high mandates in such a way that in the end there is "none good, no, not one."

Great social ills such as war, crime, and divorce, together with the individual ills such as drunkenness, gambling, and fraudulent dealings, are in the last analysis but symptoms of the real disease. They are pox on the body. The sickness is organic, unto death. Man is sick because he is estranged from God, hostile to the rule of God, and indifferent to the love of God. Before the eternal court, the judgment seat of God, his crime is not that he cheated or drank or cursed; his crime is that he stood God at bay. As long as he is engaged in pitting himself against God, his drunkenness and immorality will remain but evidences of his success and triumph; he is yet in command; he has not capitulated; defiantly, in drunken swagger, he is still his own. He may still gloat over the mischief he is making because the very mischief attests to his independence. To make a broadside attack on the symptoms, therefore, will achieve little, unless the preacher directs his big guns on the inner citadel—the rebellion of the fallen will, heart, and mind.

The tragedy of man's sinfulness lies in the very royalty of his station. He was not created a worm nor a commoner. He was created a prince, a member of the celestial family with the angels, archangels, and God. He was given dominion over the planet. He is of the ruling family. Had he not been given a station a little lower than the angels, had he been but a commoner, his defection would not have been of such grave consequence. Because he was a prince, however, his rebellion shook the kingdom. As Christ assured us that the angels are jubilant over the return of one rebel, so the angels must have wept over the Fall. In fact, so agitated was God himself that in the fullness of time he went to the lengths of sending his own Son to effect our return. In that one prohibition in the Garden of Eden God had placed the destiny of a part of his own celestial family, Man. The disobedience that marked man's departure from God and his consequent alliance with the enemy was not a trifle: it shook heaven and earth. And every disobedience, in small matters or large, qualitatively has the same gigantic stature. It is the spectacle of man defying his God, setting up a rival rule, and committing treason in the kingdom. The sin is not fornication; it is betrayal of God. The sin is not coveting; it is defiance of God. The sin is not stealing; it is defrauding God. David, in his repentant cry, had reached this awful awareness, "Against thee, and thee alone, have I sinned." He was a prince, in God's royal household, and while he had sinned against Uriah and Bathsheba, in these sins against men he discovered the elemental character of his sin: rebellion against God, his Father—and he a prince!

To preach the law as if we are but worms, squirming about in a bit of mischief, is to miss the wonder of our station on the one hand and the immensity of our sin on the other hand.

When man is confronted by the judgment of God's law, he shows amazing adeptness at escape. The preacher must direct his frontal attack in such a way that the flanks are guarded. Otherwise the sinner will slip out of range. One of the most familiar techniques of evasion has been to excuse oneself by pleading heredity and environment as the cause of one's sin or failure. As Adam blamed Eve when the Lord confronted him, so every man tries to pin the blame on someone or something. He abdicates his rights as a free man and his duties as a responsible creature and willingly assumes the role of "a helpless piece . . . on the chequerboard," moved here or there by hereditary and

environmental forces. The prevailing interest in psychiatry is symptom of this dvice. A man is as he is, and does as he does, because of an unfortunate choice of grandfathers or because a thunderstorm frightened him as a boy of three. Once having probed these facts out of his dim past, obviously he stands exonerated for rape at the age of twenty-one. Moreover, instead of repenting, he can neatly lay the blame to family on the one hand and society on the other. The key to restoration, in consequence, lies in eugenics and social planning. And, instead of rising up like a man, he can spend the rest of his life in self-pity.

It is strange that man, who could at least enjoy the dignity and price of his rebellion against God, will ever surrender this mark of his "princeliness" and yield all credit and blame, and thus all control, to heredity and environment. He surrenders the right to be a *self,* and becomes a nobody, rather than face up to the law of God as the prince he is by creation.

One of the most exciting aspects about the Scriptural picture of man is the fact that he can, by God's help, defy both heredity and environment and in a new freedom and power given him from God recover the gift of independence which he surrendered at the Fall. If he will face the fact that he is a prince in rebellion, but a prince still, he can be on the way to recapturing the right and power of rulership. God will again commission him to have dominion over this planet.

Another common flank escape is to deal with sin in mathematical terms. A man reasons that he has done wrong, to be sure, but added all together, he is more good than he is bad. A modern Eve might plead that of course she did disobey God and eat the fruit, but she did not burn down the forests of Eden nor did she slit Adam's throat. After all, a girl ought to be given credit for what she did not do! A balance should be struck before a person is condemned; perhaps he is not in the red.

How absurd this is in God's parlance may be illustrated by the bank teller who on Monday embezzled one thousand dollars from the bank. When called to account, he pleaded that he had during the week handled in all one hundred thousand dollars, only one thousand dishonestly, and that he had a balance of 99 to 1 for honesty. Or the husband who lived each year eleven months faithfully with his wife, and one month with his mistress, and was enraged to be called un-

faithful because, after all, he had a balance of 11 to 1 on the side of faithfulness.

Our pews on Sunday are full of people who add and subtract in the presence of God. Like the elder brother in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, man expects his Father to give credit where credit is due! Or, like the laborers who had worked from early morning and had received the same compensation as those of the eleventh hour, is it not fair to demand that not all receive the same pay, or the same condemnation? that God do some elementary arithmetic in dealing with men and thus not deal to all men the same measure of condemnation or grace?

The preaching of the law should bring these spiritual and moral mathematicians up short to ask themselves in all earnestness, "Would I want to stand before the Judgment Seat and demand of God that he give me precisely what I had coming, no more and no less?" Who wants God to be mathematically just in the grave hour of judgment? Who in that moment would have the audacity to utter any other prayer than that of the publican, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

It is extremely difficult to surrender all rights before God. The mother whose son has been killed in an accident cries, "What have I done to deserve this?"—as if her rights before God have been transgressed in this misfortune. We are quite glib in the confessional service and readily confess that God could with perfect justice reject us and condemn us for all eternity. If God could impose this supreme sentence upon us with "perfect justice," certainly we should be able to confess that he could inflict us with lesser ills with the same justice. We should be able, for instance, to say, "Thou couldst with perfect justice burn down my house, strike down my wife with cancer and my child with polio, derange my mind and lay waste my earth." If we are unwilling to concede these rights to God, we are in effect reserving rights to ourselves over against God. We are yet mathematicians counting on our fingers the credits and merits which we can register in the face of God. Our mouths are not yet stopped; we are not yet ready to be still in his presence and know that he alone is God. We have not yet died!

It is in the first commandment of the Decalogue that man's great sin is revealed. He steals existence, and himself, from God. Hans Nielsen Hauge, the Norwegian reformer of the nineteenth century, declares in his autobiography, "When I used to go to confession to

receive the forgiveness of my sins, I would ask myself whether I had committed any sins worth mentioning. I knew I was supposed to examine myself in the light of God's commandments. But I was not aware that I had transgressed any commandment except the fourth. I know that I had not honored my parents as I ought. . . . But it never entered my mind that I had transgressed the first commandment." What man can assert any rights as he measurs his life against Luther's explanation of this commandment, "We would fear, love, and trust in God above all things." We fear unemployment or death more than we fear God. We love life more than we love God. We trust in friends or armaments or the government more than we trust God. We, in effect, reduce God to some optional luxury, like the opera, which we may have or not without life being much affected.

Charged with ignoring the rights of ownership, which are God's, man still rears his defenses. To be sure, he has stolen his existence from God. He has used his time, talents, and holdings with no particular reference to the fact that they belonged to God. But he has used them respectably and decently, and should at least be given credit for that! Let us suppose that two bank tellers had each embezzled $20,000. One used his money to play the races; the other used his to build a home for his family whom he loved. Brought to court, let us suppose that the second man pleaded that he ought to be treated differently from the first man because, after all, he had used his money honorably. The court would obviously regard as irrelevant to the charge of embezzlement the manner in which he had used the stolen money. The charge was theft! The question was, "Had he stolen that which was not his or had he not?" The force of God's law is not that of social ethics; the point is that man has lived, whether honorably or dishonorably in the sight of men, in indifference to the ownership and rulership of God. He may on Sunday morning confess that he believes in God, and on Monday would indeed be affronted were someone to charge him with being God-less or an atheist, but all the week through he handles his time, his holdings, his abilities, and his plans as if God were dead. He cannot be accused of frittering away his time, nor squandering his wealth, nor defrauding his neighbor. He is a pillar in the community. But he is a thief, the greatest of them all, because he has stolen his existence from God. And before the terrifying judgment

of God, despite his ordered life, he will appear defenseless before the great commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods. . . ."

To preach the law so as to dislodge the complacency of the "decent" man and to keep him from slipping away again is the preacher's exacting task. Of such people it was that the Lord said that thieves and harlots were more eligible candidates for the kingdom than they.

The most difficult flank of all to defend is the avenue of pride, and especially the pride of the repentant one. When a man says, "I am but a humble person," he may then be the proudest of all. He is proud of his repentance, proud of the fact that he has reached the point where Christ has become his Saviour and proud of his total reliance on the continuing grace of God. He flings at God his supreme claim to merit: he has surrendered all pride of self; and of this one thing he has become inordinately proud. Nowhere in the human scene does Satan show such cunning and nowhere does sin disclose such demonic perversion as in the pride of the humble.

The greatest condemnation of the law is leveled against the sins of omission. The good a man should have done, and did not do, will be his chief undoing at the Judgment. The average man in the pew, like the rich, young ruler, may be quite able to defend himself against the charges of overt sin. And, as with the rich, young ruler, it will be God's call to start doing something that will have a most shattering effect.

The one, great judgment scene which Christ describes, when the righteous are arrayed on his right and the unrighteous on his left, ushers into condemnation the people who did not do something. At that moment they might have pleaded, "We did not rob the hungry of their bread, we did not strike the cup of water from the thirsty's mouth, we did not strip men of their clothing, we did not drive men from their homes." Why should they, nice people, be condemned, who had not stolen, nor murdered, nor borne false witness? It was the terrifying weight of their omissions that judged them!

Man was created in the image of God to live in glorious company with God and all who are his. The Fall isolated him from God and from man's only true family. As a member of the human race he remains orphaned, and however gregarious he may be, in the depth of his being he, being estranged from God and God's company, is a very lonely creature. His deepest sorrows and his sublimest joys he cannot

really share with anyone but God; and, not having God, he cannot share them at all. Until he is returned to God, he remains an uncompanioned creature.

Moreover, his trek back to God, through conviction of sin, repentance, and death of the old self, is a solitary journey. Not until he has been ushered, alone, before the judgment of God is he ready to re-enter a company, the body of Christ, the church. It is therefore that the preaching of the law is leveled at the individual. The moment he is aware of another human being at his side, to whom he can "pass the buck" or with whom he can make advantageous comparisons, the force of his own sinfulness may be lost. Or, if the preacher lashes out against social sins, the sins of the community, the nation, or the race, the defendant may escape, unless the preacher is careful to attach individual guilt to every social ill, so that the individual cries out for forgiveness for the sins which he shares with his society. A sermon against racial discrimination, for instance, preached to a midwestern village congregation, will require much skill to leave the member of the congregation repentant for his guilt in the situation. The common slogan "America, repent!" has no real significance because it is I, as an American, who must repent. We do not, and at the last Judgment will not, appear before God as families or as nations; we come one by one, lonely and unaccompanied, to be judged, be convicted, confess, repent, and be forgiven. The healing is within a great company, within the church; but the journey back to the Father's house is a trek which man makes alone. To ease his loneliness on the way is to do him disservice.

The first great service of the law is to effect man's undoing, to shatter all his pretenses at righteousness, to annul all his claims and rights before God, and to throw him at last totally upon the mercy of the Court. This would be a cruel task for the preacher to undertake if he stood not ready to tell the story of the mercy of the Court. But he knows also that the glorious story of mercy, in the Gospel, will be quite meaningless until man has been confronted by the demands of holiness, has struggled to fulfill them, has been exposed in his utter inability to do so, has assumed responsibility for his failure as personal guilt, and then has thrown himself upon the Court for mercy.

To bring man to this pass, sin must consistently be represented as the deep rebellion of man against God. Sin is not ignorance which

enlightenment or even the revelation of God's love will correct. Sin is not frustration, failure, or defeat which an alliance with God for help and reenforcement will overcome. Sin is essentially rebellion, unbelief, and disobedience, which man must confess, repent of, and for which he needs mercy and forgiveness. To offer him enlightenment without forgiveness will not come to grips with his deeper plight. To proffer God's help or assistance in the struggle without forgiveness will not overcome his despair. The Gospel deals not primarily with man's blindness nor with his defeats; the Gospel offers him something for his guilt. Man, as a rebel, needs first reconciliation and forgiveness. From this gift as a fountainhead all other gifts of grace can flow. If the law fails to force him into the role of a rebel, the Gospel can offer him nothing.

The preaching of the law would be quite futile were it not that the Word or Message preached is the Word of Another. The most brilliant prosecution, humanly speaking, could not make the charge "stick" that I should be held responsible for the sins of Adam which brought me into this plight. By every canon of reason I should be able to plead exoneration on the basis of my birth into the sinful state. But by the power of this Word I am brought to assume guilt not only for the isolated aberrations of my life but also for my sinful state itself. And I cry, Woe is me, I am undone, not alone because I have sinned, but because I—the I which was born when I was born—*I am a sinful man.*

On Prophecy and Fulfillment

By Robert E. Bornemann

ADVENT is traditionally the season of the Old Testament. Its atmosphere is one of expectancy and hope. The days are filled with a sense of imminence, the nearness of the event that will bring meaning and purpose to life—that will bring even life itself. In preparation for this event, in which "the hopes and fears of all the years are met," the church turns her attention to the proclamation of those who before the event gave testimony to it. The season is characterized by the familiar formula of the first evangelist, "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet." Advent, above all other seasons of the church year, is the season of prophecy and fulfillment:

> Behold, a Branch is growing
> Of loveliest form and grace;
> As prophets sung, foreknowing,
> It springs from Jesse's race.

This traditional emphasis of Advent raises a serious problem. Biblical criticism has shaken to the roots the traditional view of inspiration and has revolutionized our understanding of the nature of prophecy. We can no longer accept the view of the Scriptures held by the evangelist and the medieval hymn writer, nor as a consequence can we accept their exegetical method. We find ourselves in a quandary. Piety and tradition, for example, lead us to accept the assertion that Micah foretold the place of Jesus' birth (Matt. 2:5, 6); intellectual honesty prevents us. The problem rests basically in the question, How are we to view prophecy and fulfillment? It is with this problem that we are concerned here. A detailed discussion is not possible, but within the limits of our space it is at least possible to set forth certain principles which in my view are basic for a right understanding of the relation between prophecy and fulfillment.

The Function and Message of the Prophets

At the center of the religion of Israel is the covenant. Its nature and content are perhaps best suggested by Exodus 19:3b-9a (J; ca. 950 B.C.). Here the covenant is described as a personal relationship between Yahweh and the people; it is a relationship established by Yahweh in his deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Exod. 19:4, 5). This covenant relationship, based on what was regularly in-

terpreted as a saving act of God, involved obedience to the will and purpose of God (Exod. 10:5). God's act in choosing Israel and Israel's responsibility of obedience resulted in the formation of a kingdom and holy nation, a people of God (Exod. 19:6). This nation refers in the first place to Israel. The notion that Israel was not an end in itself but pointed beyond itself to something greater is not expressly stated in the Exodus narrative, but is suggested elsewhere by J (cf. Gen. 12:1-3) and implied both by the fact of Israel's election and by the prophetic interpretation of history. The essential features of the covenant faith may be summarized as follows: Yahweh in a saving act in history has chosen Israel to be his own people, a holy nation, obeying his voice, that through them he might perform his will and achieve his purpose of glory.

To recognize the centrality of the covenant relationship in the faith of Israel is essential to an understanding of the message and function of the prophets. By nature Israel was a covenant people and owed its very existence as a people to the covenant. The Israelites were not a unity by reason of common ancestory, nationality, or race, but by reason of their common worship of Yahweh. Israel was in fact created by the covenant. It is thus that it is called not a nation, but a congregation (*qahal*). By origin and nature Israel was not a nation just like the other nations. To maintain within Israel a proper understanding of its nature as a covenant people was the primary function of the prophets.

It was to this end that they preached, and it is in view of this function that we are to understand their message. In whatever situation they spoke—cultus, social life, politics—the word which they brought was the proclamation of the will and purpose of the covenant God for Israel, and it was spoken in a specific situation at a definite point in Israel's history. The prophets proclaimed the word which God had spoken for the prophet's own times. They were concerned with what God purposed to do in Israel in "this moment." They spoke to their own "present and now."

If this is so, then it is clear that the word they brought was intelligible and relevant both to them and to their hearers. This is to say that the attempt to justify prophecy and fulfillment by asserting that the prophets spoke more than they knew is wrong; for this assertion not only involves an erroneous view of inspiration, but also a misapprehension of the prophetic function and word. The prophets knew exactly what they were saying. They proclaimed the word which the covenant God spoke to their own day.

To proclaim this word, however, meant retrospection, because "what God has done is intrinsically related to that which he is doing."[1] The present crisis created by the coming of the word of Yahweh was illuminated by what had happened in the past. At the same time the present crisis casts light upon the events of the

1 P. S. Minear, *The Eyes of Faith* (1946), p. 204.

past, so that they were seen in a new perspective. The prophetic word not only made clear the issues of the present, but also reinterpreted the meaning of the past.

In a similar way the prophetic proclamation of God's word in the present was prospective. What God speaks today has consequences for tomorrow. The word is not empty sound; it is dynamic and creative; "it accomplishes that which God proposes" (cf. Isa. 55:8 ff.). The prophet, because he spoke God's word, was of necessity not only a forth-teller, but also a fore-teller. But what the prophet had to say concerning the future was intimately bound up with the word spoken to the present. This means that the prophet's vision of what was to come was not just a guess or wishful thinking; his message for the future was determined by the word of God he spoke. On the other hand, this also means that the prophetic visions of the future were not, as Scott puts it, "glimpses of a predetermined future which is shortly to pass through the present moment into the past, like a motion-picture film passing the lens of the projector. The future is not so mechanically determined. What is about to happen is the necessary consequence of a moral situation; at the same time it will be the concrete realization of the prophetic 'Word' which expresses in relation to that situation the righteous will of Yahweh."[2]

To see the prophetic message and function in these terms is to distinguish the prophet from the "social reformer," whose concern for the betterment of present conditions lacks the inner dynamic of the word, and from the "fortune-teller," who reads tomorrow's papers today. The prophetic function was to declare the word—the will and purpose—of God to the present situation. As this proclamation to the present involved the past, it meant the illumination of the present and the reinterpretation of the past; as it involved the future, it meant the assurance that this purpose would be fulfilled.

The Prophets and the Messiah

It is upon this background, the covenant and the covenant purpose of God, that the Old Testament hope for the coming of the Messiah is to be viewed. Messiahship has its roots in the office of king, the very term "Messiah" being a royal title. Kingship, while a later and an essentially foreign element in Israelite culture, was nevertheless interpreted as a special function of the covenant. This is indicated by the title given the king, *Meshiach Yahweh,* the Anointed of Yahweh. The anointing of the king in Israel was a sacred act which set the king apart from all others and placed him in a special relationship with Yahweh. As the chosen and anointed of Yahweh the king was subject to the covenant purpose of God, receiving thereby a special function under the covenant.

The king was in the first place the visible head of a "holy nation," that is of

2 R. B. Y. Scott, *The Relevance of the Prophets* (1944), p. 10.

the covenant people. He was the vicegerent of Yahweh. As such he exercised his power and authority over all Israel (the ideal Israel) even when his power was not actually identical with the people and territory of Israel. The king was also the leader in the "wars of Yahweh," and so appeared in the role of the savior of Israel. To save was the proper function of God *as king* (cf. Isa. 33:32), and so was also the proper function of the Anointed of Yahweh, just as it had been the function of the judges before the advent of kingship in Israel. Finally, it was the function of the king to serve as the highest judge. He was to see that the will of God was known and performed. While he himself was not a lawgiver, he had the responsibility of administering the law of God. He was to rule wisely and with insight; he was to make justice and righteousness real in the land. In short, the king as the Anointed (Messiah) of Yahweh was charged with the responsibility of making the covenant real in Israel, so that both king and people, remaining true to their covenant election, might serve the purpose of God.

Kingship was associated primarily with the house of David. This association is found already in the age of David and Solomon when kingship was first being adapted to the special situation of the covenant faith. It rested upon "the covenant of Yahweh with the house of David" recorded in II Sam. 7. Within the mixture of sources and late editorial additions of this chapter is imbedded a poetic version of this "Davidic covenant" which is to be dated in the period of the united monarchy.[3] Two factors are of special interest. The poem describes the special relationship between Yahweh and the king in terms of divine adoption (7:14). Solomon and the descendants of David are set into a father-son relationship with Yahweh. There is here, however, no suggestion that the king is divine; the ascription of sonship is purely on the basis of the king's function. This passage is, incidentally, the source for the messianic title, Son of God, which is in no case an affirmation of deity, but only of the bearer's function as the Anointed of Yahweh, the king-Messiah.[4] The poem also speaks of the endurance of the Davidic line; God will build and establish the house of David, a promise which was later to keep alive the hope for the king-Messiah who would restore the glories of David and Solomon and usher in the new age.

It is this understanding of kingship as a covenant function that provided the basis and pattern for the figure of the Messiah to come. In Israel's history this hope of a coming Messiah, the ideal king of Israel, rose out of the distresses and failures of Israel's kings, making its first appearance in the eighth century proph-

3 II Sam. 7:4, 5b, 11b, 12, 14, 18, 19, 27ab.

4 This is clear in Ps. 2:7, "I will proclaim the decree of Yahweh: he said to me, Thou art my son; it is I who this day have begotten thee." That there is here no thought of the divinity of the king is indicated by the use of the common adoption formula, "Thou art my son," and by the expression, "this day." Throughout this "royal psalm" the emphasis falls not on the being of the king, but on his function as the instrument of God's covenant will and purpose.

ets, Isaiah and Micah. The messianic hope was never a dominant motif, but it never disappeared, for Messiahship, as kingship, was closely bound up with the covenant purpose of God, a purpose that would surely be fulfilled.

In view of these considerations the prophetic words concerning the Messiah are to be understood as related to specific historical situations and to the assurance that despite present failures God will achieve his purpose. In other words, the prophets did not speak of the Messiah in a vacuum, nor were they predicting the events of the life of Jesus. In the face of the ruling king's failure to fulfill his covenant responsibility as the Anointed of Jahweh, the prophets bore witness to the fact that there would come one who truly would realize this function and in so doing would establish the kingdom of Yahweh.

This is the case, for example, in the celebrated passage, Isaiah 7:1-9:7. These chapters, although they represent a fairly extended period of time, are nevertheless a unity, and very likely go back in their content and arrangement to the prophet himself. The starting point for understanding this passage is the threat to Judah because of the Syro-Ephraimite Alliance effected by Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel, as a bulwark against Assyria. Judah, on the advice of Isaiah, refused to join the alliance, and is now faced with the prospect of war to force it to join. On the background of this historical situation Isa. 7:1-6 presents a contrast significant for understanding the whole section, the contrast between Ahaz, who with his advisers is trembling and fearful, and Isaiah, who is confident and fearless in the face of the northern threat. Isaiah, to reassure Ahaz, brings a message of weal (7:7-9) which not only proclaims the defeat of Samaria and Syria, but which lays bare the real issue: "If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established." The real issue centers in the person of Ahaz as the king and ruler of the people of God. In view of the Israelite understanding of kingship the picture becomes clearer. When God speaks through the prophet and Ahaz refuses to believe but continues to tremble and fear, then his fearfulness becomes an act of disobedience and faithlessness: "If you do not believe, your reign and throne shall fall." God offers Ahaz the chance to ask a sign for himself (7:10-12), but Ahaz piously refuses; his refusal is a refusal to trust God and to heed the word of Yahweh which Isaiah brings, and thus it becomes a betrayal of his office as the Anointed of Yahweh.

In the face of Ahaz' refusal Isaiah offers a sign (7:13-16): there is a young woman who is about to bear a child; before this child is two or three years old this whole danger to Judah will be gone. To this child Isaiah gives a symbolic name, Immanuel, which in no sense implies divinity but only that God will be with Judah and so bring success and deliverance (cf. Ps. 23:4), a note of weal which is further developed in the expression, "curds and honey."[5] This same mes-

5 To interpret the meaning of Isa. 7:14-16 in this sense is by no means to deny the virgin birth of our Lord; it does deny, however, that Isaiah spoke of it.

sage given to Ahaz is given to the people in another sign, which also deals with a child who bears a symbolic name, the "sign of Maher-shalal-hash-baz" (8:1-4). But both the king and his people refuse to believe, and for their faithlessness and rejection of the word of God they stand under judgment (7:17-25).

Ahaz has utterly failed as the king and leader of the people of God; he has failed in carrying out God's purpose. But God's purpose will be carried out; there will come a true king, an Anointed of Yahweh, who will fulfill the will of God. As a symbol of this future king-Messiah Isaiah adopted the figure which he had used earlier, that of the little child who bore the symbolic name, Immanuel. Thus in 8:5-8 Isaiah speaks of the rejection of God's word by the people and the punishment which shall come, and he speaks of the land as already belonging to Immanuel. Again, in 8:9-10 Isaiah challenges the people to trust, for "God is with us" (Immanuel). The meaning of Judah's faithlessness and fear becomes even clearer in 8:11-13: the Lord of hosts whom the people ought to fear and trust becomes, because of their rejection, a stumbling-block. The result is punishment; "they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be thrust into thick darkness."

But the time will come when the darkness, caused by the people's refusal of God's word, will be taken away. This will be by the birth and the glorious reign of the true king of the future, the king-Messiah through whom God will accomplish his purpose. God's light will shine, and there shall be deliverance as on the day of Midian (9:2-5). This vision of the future centers in the little child (9:6), the new ruler, the Immanuel symbol. To this Messiah honorific names, typical of royalty, are given,[6] and his reign is described in traditional covenant terms as the ideal fulfillment of the function of Davidic kingship.

This, in brief, is the meaning which these chapters had for Isaiah and his hearers. They were prompted by the failure both of the king and of his people in their covenant responsibilities. It was with this situation that Isaiah was concerned, and in view of it he proclaimed the signs of God, the power of God, the punishment of God, and finally the deliverance of God when the failure of Ahaz will be overcome by the reign of a true scion of David. The whole section is messianic in that it deals with the covenant figure of the king-Messiah. Can it be said, then, that these are prophecies of Jesus, *ho Christos?* They are not if we think of them as predictions of New Testament events, or as "riddles" spoken by Isaiah but whose meanings he did not know. On the other hand, Isaiah declared here the will and purpose of God as it applied to his own day, a purpose which was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ. In view of this it can be said that Isa. 7:1-9:7 is a prophecy concerning Jesus, but only indirectly in terms of God's purpose.

6 The title, Mighty God (*'el gibbor*) means a mighty hero and does not imply divinity.

In a similar way Isaiah's contemporary, Micah, spoke of the coming of the Messiah in Mic. 5:2-4. Here Micah is not at all predicting where the Messiah is to be born. He is simply identifying the "one who is to be ruler in Israel" with the ancient family of David and Solomon. The prophecy is an expression of the hope for a Davidic king-Messiah who shall be ruler, shepherd,[7] and the bringer of a new age, one of peace and security.

Again, Jer. 23:1-8 is a good example of how the prophets spoke of the Messiah. This passage, a prophecy of weal and hope, forms the conclusion to the collection of "royal oracles" spoken against the house of the king of Judah (Jer. 21:11-22:30). Its immediate background is the reign of the last king of Judah, Zedekiah. Jeremiah begins (23:1-4) with a general woe upon irresponsible shepherds and then applies it by identifying the shepherds with the rulers, Zedekiah and his advisers have utterly failed in their responsibilities and as a consequence have scattered the sheep, the people of God. Punishment will fall upon the rulers, but God will gather the people from every land that he may re-establish them in their own pasture, where the purpose of God will be realized. This new life is described in terms reflecting the notion of a new creation (23:3) and of the peaceable kingdom of God.

In vv. 5, 6 this vision becomes more definite and concrete. The new creation of the people of God brings with it the new foundation of Davidic kingship. Here Jeremiah describes in wholly traditional terms the ideal king of the future, the king-Messiah who will truly realize the covenant purpose of God. Significantly, this picture of the Messiah is set in direct contrast to the reigning king, Zedekiah. While Zedekiah was set on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar, the Messiah is elected by Yahweh. The contrast is continued by a play on names. Zedekiah means Yahweh-my-righteousness; the Messiah is called a "Righteous Branch raised unto David." Zedekiah's name was Mattaniah, but upon his coming to the throne he took the name Zedekiah. The manifest failure of Zedekiah's reign is underscored by the fact that the Righteous Branch who realizes the covenant is called Yahweh-our-righteousness, a title which he does not assume, but which is given him.

Throughout these and the following verses (23:7, 8) Jeremiah is not predicting the future or the New Testament, but in condemning the king's failure he is expressing the assurance that God will realize his purpose. The emphasis rests here, then, on the saving acts of the covenant God. The deliverance from Egypt was the saving act by which Yahweh established his covenant. But now, Jeremiah would say, when the Righteous Branch shall come, the covenant will be realized and fulfilled. Because this is a fulfillment and not a recapitulation or restoration,

7 The title "shepherd," a common Near Eastern royal title, is also employed by Jeremiah and Ezekiel as a title of the Messiah. Jesus' self-designation as shepherd is to be understood in this context; in calling himself the Good Shepherd he was not using the images and figures of everyday pastoral life, but was identifying himself with messianic expectation (cf. I Pet. 2:25).

it is something new, and so no longer will the people swear by Yahweh who delivered them from Egypt, but rather they will swear by Yahweh who through his Messiah has realized his covenant purpose.

The figure of the Messiah stemmed from the Israelite understanding of kingship as a covenant function. It was only one of several "images" employed by the prophets to express their certainty that God's covenant purpose would be realized and that his kingdom would be established.[8] When the prophets spoke of the Messiah they spoke always to a specific historical situation interpreted in light of the covenant, and so the messianic expectation was expressed in terms of their assurance that God would fulfill his covenant purpose, and not in terms of prediction.

Jesus Christ, the Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word

The coming of Christ, the Word, precipitated a crisis not unlike that created by the word of Yahweh as spoken by the prophets. Like the prophetic word, this event was closely related to what God had done in the past. The issues and meaning of the event of Christ were made clear by the events and witness of the past: for in Jesus Christ the covenant purpose of God is fulfilled: the kingdom of God has come and the new age has dawned. Hence, in Jesus Christ is seen the fulfillment of the prophetic word which in its own day had given witness to this purpose of God. So it was that the apostles were certain that they were following no cleverly devised *mythoi* when they made known the Christ and the power of his coming; not only were they eyewitnesses of his majesty, but also "we have the prophetic word made more confirmed, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (II Pet. 1:19). The prophetic word made clear the meaning of the event of Christ and by this event was itself confirmed.

At the same time the past was made clear in this coming of Christ. While by the prophetic word Christ was seen to be the fulfiller and fulfillment of the purpose of the covenant God, he as the fulfiller of this purpose became also its revealer. He declared the mystery of the purpose of God, while at the same time he corrected the misconceptions and removed the ambiguities surrounding the understanding of God's purpose under the Old Covenant. The dual nature of the relation between Christ and the prophetic word is suggested in Rom. 16:25, 26. "Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed and through the prophetic writings is made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God. . . ." The

8 Cf. the non-messianic figures of the remnant, the Servant of Yahweh, and the notion of a new creation.

purpose of God, proclaimed in their day by the prophets, is revealed in Christ because he fulfilled it; but Christ himself is proclaimed by the very prophetic Scriptures which he made clear.

The belief that Christ is the fulfillment and the revealer of the Scriptures asserts that there is an organic unity between the purpose of God as witnessed in the Old Covenant and the event of Christ. The earliest confessional formula is a clear testimony to this unity: *Iesous Christos.*

Prophecy and Fulfillment

In view of the function and message of the prophets and of the Christian confession of Christ as the fulfillment of the prophetic word, the following conclusions are suggested as being essential to an understanding of prophecy and fulfillment.

1) *The relation of prophecy and fulfillment is to be understood in terms of the covenant purpose of God.* The function of Old Testament prophecy was the proclamation of the word of God to its own day. The prophet was charged with the task of making clear to his contemporaries the purpose of God as it affected them. The proclamation of God's purpose had implications for the future, and thus the prophets spoke of impending doom, of the ideal king of Israel (Messiah), of the joys of the messianic kingdom, and of the day when the covenant would be fully and truly realized. But when they spoke of these things, they were not thinking of Jesus of Nazareth, nor were they predicting the events and details of the New Testament. They were simply drawing the implications of the word they were proclaiming to their own time. The prophets declared the purpose of God as it pertained to their day. This covenant purpose of God, however, is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, in whom the unity of this purpose is revealed. In so far, then, as the prophets bore witness to this purpose, it can be said that they bore witness (albeit indirect) to Christ, who is both its fulfiller and fulfillment.

2) *The starting point for understanding the prophetic word is Jesus Christ and not the prophetic word itself.* It is of the nature of Old Testament prophecy that the mode and character of its fulfillment cannot be determined beforehand. Prophecy is not a matter of precise prediction. The relation of prophecy and fulfillment is not that of correspondence. One cannot begin with prophecy and come out with the picture of Jesus. The fulfillment is always something other than the prophecy. As the fulfillment of the purpose of God, Christ is also its revealer. Apart from him the prophetic word is a hidden word.

3) *At the same time the event of Christ is to be understood in the light of the prophetic word.* In Christ the prophetic word is confirmed; the Old Testament enables us to see in Christ the fulfillment of the purpose of God. What happens in the gospel is made clear by what happened in the past, for past and present are

organically related in the purpose of God. In view of this, the prophetic word becomes an integral part of our understanding of the person and function of Christ (Messiah), of the nature of the New Covenant, and of the church, the New Israel. "For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. . . . And we have the prophetic word made more confirmed, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place. . . ."

The Immanuel Passage as Messianic Prophecy

By Harold L. Creager

CHRISTIANS have always treasured the Old Testament predictions about Christ. We rejoice in the foregleams that God revealed to prepare the way for the coming of his Son and to help us understand the spiritual meaning of that supreme event.

In studying these, and especially in connection with the deeply significant Immanuel passage in Isa. 7:14, it is helpful to realize that there are three different types of Messianic passages in the Old Testament. First of all there are explicit, direct predictions of the Christ; examples may be found in Micah 5:2-4 and Isa. 53. Then there are statements about the Messianic era and the blessings connected wth it, with no mention of a personal Messiah; a good example is Isa. 2:2-4. And third, there are passages in which the *primary* significance is connected with situations or events in Old Testament times, but which have also a *secondary* reference and application in connection with Christ.

This third group is quite extensive, and many such are quoted in the New Testament. That is, the New Testament writers found what may well be called "illustrative parallels" to the things of Christ in many Old Testament passages.[1] An excellent instance is found in Matt. 2:18, where Jer. 31:15 is quoted in connection with the slaughter of the children in Bethlehem. Jeremiah had spoken of Ramah, which is not Bethlehem. He spoke of Rachel and her children; but Bethlehem was in the tribe of Judah—and this was not connected at all with Rachel but with Jacob's other wife, Leah. Jeremiah was actually speaking about the deporting of captives from the Hebrew kingdom to Mesopotamia. But that event was more than a mere event; it was an expression of an attitude—a godless ruler was oppressing the people of God. That was what Herod did in Bethlehem; it was a new expression of the same attitude. So the Gospel writer saw an illustrative parallel and quoted it; not that Jeremiah predicted this event, but he stated something which was brought to a greater fullness of expression (that is, was "fulfilled") in a new situation in connection with Christ.

This understanding of the use of the Old Testament in the New is essential in many instances. One of the unique and marvelous things about God's revelation in the Old Testament is the fact that he led men to speak of contemporary situations in terms of greater principles, which were formulated in such a way

1 For this very suggestive expression I am indebted to the late Rev. Paul Morentz, Christian Jewish worker.

that they found very important applications in connection with Jesus Christ. This was God's intention, although very probably the prophet did not see any such further and ultimately more important significance of his utterances.

In seeking to understand the Immanuel passage, one must first look at the historical situation in which it was spoken. It is part of a narrative covering verses 1-17 and must be seen in that context. We will find that it has important significances with references to Christ; but that can be appreciated more clearly after looking at its meaning for Isaiah's own time.

The facts in the story are plain. There was a current situation of danger, Jerusalem was being threatened by neighboring nations. God sent Isaiah to King Ahaz with words of reassurance concerning this. In support of his message urging the king to trust in God, he gave also a very special message which included three items: a certain child, he said, will soon be born; before this child is more than a few years old the current danger will be removed; and the child's name will be Immanuel, meaning "God is with us."

This name Immanuel, it must be noted, is a statement of a truth about God—"God is with us." It is not a description of the individual bearing it; it does not mean that the child is God—just as the name Isaiah, which means "The Lord is salvation," does not mean that Isaiah is the Lord. Such names were common in the Old Testament. They were a declaration of the religious faith and devotion of the Hebrews. People felt so strongly and vividly the reality of God and the richness of his meaning in their lives that they asserted and proclaimed these truths in the names given to children. This particular name Immanuel, given at this particular time, was a declaration of the fact of God's favorable presence, of confidence that he would deliver them from the threatening dangers, and of the spiritual faith that it actually is God's power, not human strength, that brings the deliverance. The baby himself, it may be added, obviously was not the deliverer.

All this was called a "sign" to King Ahaz. A sign was not necessarily something miraculous or even abnormal, though sometimes it was such; the word was applied to many different things. Thus a sign could be the prediction of some specific but quite ordinary event, and the occurrence of the event as predicted; an example of this is found in the death of Eli's son (I Sam. 2:34; 4:11). Or it could be a material object; a pile of stones is called a sign in Josh. 4:6. And in Ezek. 20:12 the sabbath is called a sign. In this Isaiah passage the sign was principally this richly symbolic name Immanuel. And it was partly also the predictive time note; this message was spoken in 735 or 734 B.C., and in 732 the hostile nations were subdued—well within the time indicated.

It becomes evident, therefore, that this message was not a direct prediction of Jesus, not a Messianic passage of the first type mentioned above. But it does have very important applications to him.

In Jesus the Immanuel idea comes to complete expression. He it is who not

only gives the assurance of God's presence with men to help and bless them, but also brings the vivid fact and actual experience of it. It is highly probable that in speaking of a child, Isaiah did not indicate merely any child, but that he was consciously focusing attention on the popular expectation that a Messiah would come.[2] This hope on the part of the people probably was crude and vague, and the message God gave through Isaiah was a step in the very important process of establishing spiritual meaning in it. And in Jesus the true Messiah comes, the perfect completion of all the developed hopes in the saints of old.

In Jesus, moreover, God brings the actual deliverance from the supreme dangers—sin and death; this was in a way foreshadowed in the deliverance which God promised and brought from the dangers threatening Jerusalem in Isaiah's time. In Isa. 8:9-10, which is a continuation of the message in this verse, the victorious power of God and his Kingdom over the forces of evil is proclaimed; in Jesus this victory is brought. The whole passage is truly "fulfilled" in Christ; the basic principles expressed in Isaiah's time were brought to a climactic fullness of expression in Jesus Christ.

When this verse in Isaiah is seen in its actual historical setting, it becomes quite clear that the argument whether the Hebrew word *almah*[3] means "virgin" or "young woman" is not really important; for the revelation God was giving here was *not* about the virgin birth of Jesus. Yet, because of the concern that has been so widely felt about this word, some discussion of it is appropriate.

It is well to admit that here, as often, absolute certainty is not attainable. One must weigh probabilities—which will be found to point very strongly to a conclusion. Etymology is to be considered first; and a study of the verb root and of associated derivatives both in Hebrew and in related dialects seems to indicate that the basic meaning was "a sexually mature female." There is no specific indication of virginity; the idea rather would be a "teen-ager"—probably usually virgin, but not necessarily so.[4] Unless there are strong indications to the contrary, a meaning in line with the derivation of the word, namely "young woman," is certainly more probable than one so divergent from its origin as "virgin" is; the burden of proof would definitely rest on those who would seek to establish the latter.

In considering the meaning of a word, it is of course proper to consider not only its derivation but also its actual use; that is, to see it in various passages, in which the several contexts may throw light on it. This, however, must be done

2 The idea, sometimes advanced, that he referred to a child to be born either to himself or to the king, is very improbable.

3 See also Albert E. Myers, "The Use of *Almah* in the Old Testament," in The Lutheran Quarterly, VII (May, 1955), 137-140.

4 It may be noted that in Palmyrene Aramaic a noun almost identical with *almah* even meant "harlot."

carefully and discriminatingly; for many words developed a variety of meanings, and therefore the fact that a word has a certain meaning in some or even in many passages does not prove that it has that same meaning in some other passage. An interesting illustration is found in the word *mishpat,* usually meaning "judgment" or "justice." It occurs 422 times in the Old Testament; and among all those occurrences, according to the Brown-Driver-Briggs lexicon, only once does it mean "the time of judgment (at the end of the world)," Psalm 1:5; but it would be quite wrong to make an *a priori* denial of that meaning there and to say that it must have the same meaning in that passage as it has elsewhere. Each individual occurrence must be studied in itself, in the light of the context and of all the information available, to determine the meaning there.

This word *almah* occurs in only six other places in the Old Testament; in all of them it is likely that the persons mentioned actually are virgin, but in none of them is there any emphasis on the idea of virginity as such—except possibly in Song Sol. 6:8. But even if it specifically meant "virgin" in all those other six passages, that would not necessarily require that it have that meaning here. Moreover, even if it could be proved that in actual usage it always meant "virgin" (which of course cannot be done), it would be possible that Isaiah used it for a maiden who was still virgin when he spoke but who was about to be married and would bear a child by normal processes within a year. Certainly there is no reason whatever to suppose that Isaiah said there would be a virgin-born child who would be only a few years old when Damascus would be conquered; in fact, we are confident that Jesus is the only person in all human history who was born of a virgin.

It is true that the Septuagint translation has here the Greek word *parthenos,* which usually means "virgin." But three things are to be said concerning this. (1) What the translators thought is not conclusive proof of the true original meaning; they sometimes made errors. A translation is only subsidiary—though its testimony must receive serious consideration, it does not have determinative authority. (2) The meaning of *parthenos* is not always "virgin," in either biblical or classical usage. The Septuagint has it in Gen. 34:3 for Dinah after she had been raped; and Sophocles applied it to one Iole, who was Heracles' paramour, in his *Trachiniae,* line 1219. (3) The later Greek translators, Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, used *neanis,* "young woman," in this passage.

It is evident, therefore, that the normal etymological meaning of the Hebrew word can be understood here without prejudice of any sort, either from the context or from other usage or from the Greek version.

When Matthew uses this Isaiah passage in 1:22-23, certainly the main emphasis is on the word Immanuel, and on the ideas of special divine presence and salvation which are associated with it. What, then, about the word "virgin" there? As is frequently the case in the New Testament, it is not the original Hebrew but the Greek translation of the Old Testament that is the basis of reference. Mary

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actually was virgin; and inasmuch as the Greek Bible had the word which usually meant virgin, this helped the process of using "illustrative parallels" in this instance with reference to the virginity. Isaiah did not speak at all of a virgin birth; but it was perfectly natural that his words (in their Greek translation) would be used in connection with the virgin birth of Christ.

One further item may be noted in the Matthew passage. It has sometimes been said, in an effort to establish the virgin idea as being divinely intended in Isaiah, that this quotation was made by the angel himself. But a moment's careful consideration shows otherwise. In verses 20-21, the angel speaks of the past fact of conception by the Holy Spirit, and of the future events of the birth of a son, his naming, and his saving work. The angel's words end there. Then verse 22 says: "All this took place" (or "has taken place"; the Greek verb is in the perfect tense); so, obviously, this is the Gospel writer's own comment and continuation of narrative, made much later, after the events had occurred.

The real values of Isa. 7:14 do not lie in anything about the *method* of the birth of Christ. That method is important in the actual New Testament history, and was made known in the event itself. We have the definite, positive, adequate record of fact of the virgin birth in Matthew and Luke. Whether or not it is mentioned also in the Old Testament does not in the slightest degree affect the dependability of the factual account in the New Testament, nor weaken the certainty of faith which that account gives. The Christian values of Isaiah's prophecy lie in the spiritual significances—in the fact that "God is with us" with fullness of living presence and saving power. And those values stand out in full splendor as the divine intention, over and beyond the message for Isaiah's own time.

More About the RSV and Isaiah 7:14

By Kurt Carl Hartmann

I HAVE before me one dozen leaflets, brochures, and booklets under various titles discussing the merits of the Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible. When the RSV appeared in 1952 there were a few who seemingly discovered only evil in the undertaking which was launched in 1928 by the International Council of Religious Education when it acquired the copyright from the publishers of the American Standard Version.

The adverse criticism which has arisen against the RSV has been described as "ranging from mild to bombastic," and "has been hurled at the translators and translation alike." Some have hailed the new translation as the work of "liberals" and "communists"; others have denounced it as "unholy" and "blasphemous"; and the more radical have ceremoniously set fire to it.

The writer has read some of these adverse criticisms, has heard about others, and has had to discuss a number of them with people who followed the pronouncements of the critics like sheep without a shepherd. Paul left a word about his kinsmen which, with a minor change, is quite to the point under discussion and applicable to those who severely criticize the RSV: I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God's Word, but it is not enlightened (Rom. 10:2).

Most of the passages against which invectives have been hurled are such as, twenty-two years ago, were called to our attention in a conservative Lutheran seminary as needing revision. As far as I am concerned, I am thankful for any translation which helps me to a better and deeper understanding of God's thoughts, which always have been, are, and always will be higher than my thoughts (cf. Isa. 55:8, 9).

When, prior to 1946, it was announced that the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament would appear, I placed my order for a copy. When I received it I read it as avidly as though I never in my life had had a copy of the New Testament. My desire to read it was somewhat akin to the desire for reading which Dietrich Bonhoeffer nourished in prison up to the day he was hanged in 1945. Among the many passages which immediately, clearly impressed me in this new version was the following one. All my life, up to the day I read it in the RSV, I had a most peculiar picture in my mind when I read, heard read, or quoted the King James Version of Matt. 23:24, "Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." In that version the gnat was in the throat of the coffee-drinker. Presto! When I read this same verse in the RSV, "You blind guides,

straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel," the gnat was in the coffee. Of course, the version edited by the American Revision Committee of 1901 has "strain out the gnat, and swallow the camel," but if I had read the verse in that version it did not register.

The revision of that verse—rather, the revision of "strain at" to "straining out"—set me on fire to discover other passages which might make more sense to me than they had up to that point. Sometimes it is the insignificant point which opens our eyes to the more significant. Such, plainly, was the case with me. From that day on until the present I have made a careful study of every passage which has been questioned by the critics.

The adverse critics who, on occasion, have named the RSV the devil's book, center their arguments on such greater passages as Isa. 7:14. Even in this case I have yet to discover a scholar who violently disagrees with the RSV's rendering of the passage. In fact, I was satisfied that the critics had not gone too deeply into the subject after I read the comments which my one-volume commentary on the whole Bible, by Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, makes under Isa. 7:14:

> VIRGIN—from a root, *to lie hid,* virgins being closely kept from men's gaze in their parents' custody in the East. The Hebrew and LXX here and Greek (Matt. 1:23) have the article, *the* virgin, some definite one known to the speaker and his hearers; *primarily, the woman, then a virgin* [italics mine] about immediately to become the second wife, and bear a child, whose attainment of the age of discrimination (about three years) should be preceded by the deliverance of Judah from its two invaders; its fullest significancy is realized in *"the* woman" (Gen. 3:15), whose seed should bruise the serpent's head and deliver captive man (Jer. 31:22; Micah 5:3). Language is selected such as, whilst *partially* applicable to the immediate event, receives its *fullest,* most appropriate, and exhaustive accomplishment in Messianic events. The New Testament application of such prophecies is not a strained "accommodation"; rather the temporary fulfillment of an adaptation of the far-reaching prophecy to the present passing event, which foreshadows typically the great central end of prophecy, Jesus Christ (Rev. 19:10). Evidently the wording is such as to apply more fully to Jesus Christ than to the prophet's son; "virgin" applies, in its simplest sense, to the Virgin Mary, rather than to the prophetess who ceased to be a *virgin* when she "conceived"; "Immanuel," *God with us* (John 1:14, Rev. 21:3), cannot in a strict sense apply to Isaiah's son, but only to him who is presently called expressly (ch. 9:6) "the child, the Son, Wonderful (cf. ch. 8-18), the mighty *God."* Local and temporary features (as v. 15, 16) are added in every type; otherwise it would be no type, but the thing itself.

Among other studies of this verse in Isaiah, I came across an excellent one by William Sanford LaSor,[1] part of which reads:

> When the Revised Standard Version appeared on September 30, 1952, containing the words "young woman" in place of the familiar "virgin" in Isaiah 7:14, there began to appear a flood of articles, sermons, news releases, etc., centering largely about this verse. This was not the first Bible with such a translation. The French *Version Synodale,* in recent times, and

1 *Isaiah 7-14—Young Woman or Virgin?*

the Greek translations of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotian, in ancient times, among others, used "young woman" (*jeune fille* and *neanis*), but these seem to have gone unnoticed. When the Rationalists argued that the virgin birth of Jesus was not historical, but had been suggested by the words of Isaiah 7:15, conservatives were quick to point out that the word used in the prophecy did not specifically mean "virgin."

The only conclusion to be drawn from the evidence, in my opinion, is that *betula* unequivocally means "virgin," whereas *almah* simply means "young woman."

Nor can the argument be advanced that there is evidence that originally contained the word *betulah*. The Isaiah manuscript discovered in the 'Ain Fashkha cave in 1947 clearly has *almah*.

One point remains to be clarified. The virgin birth of Jesus is not called into question by the word used in Isaiah 7:14. Did Paul reject the virgin birth because he said in Galatians 4:4 "born of a woman" and not "born of a virgin?" Moreover, to speak of Jesus as having been "born of a virgin" is not sufficient. Parthenogenesis is not unknown in zoology, and could theoretically occur in the human species. It was the *conception* of Jesus that was miraculous.

Isaiah's wonderful prophecy did not reveal that fact, but it contained the germ of the truth....

In the present controversy over the RSV, a greater point seems to have gone unnoticed. That might be stated as follows: How do we know what the Bible really says? The Roman Catholic Church has answered the question by saying, The Church tells you. The Protestant Church insists that it is not by the authority of the Church, but by the inner testimony of the Spirit that the Bible is authenticated. This principle is sound, but unfortunately it can lead to abuses.

What happens, for example, when one man or sect says, The Spirit tells me that the Bible says thus-and-so, and another man or sect says, No, the Spirit tells me something quite different? The multitude of Protestant sects and denominations is ample evidence that the danger is real. There must be some objective guard, something outside of the individual, to offset subjective abuses. The Bible itself must be sufficiently objective in itself.

Since the days of the Protestant Reformation, Protestant scholars have been struggling to establish sound principles of exegesis. At the cost of persecution as well as hard work, the grammatico-historical basis of exegesis has been established. Lately this has been seriously challenged, first by rationalists who, in their failure to establish the historical Jesus, have turned to spiritualizing the text, then by the Neo-orthodox in their attempts to find the meaning behind the text. Shall we also add to this the Evangelicals who, in their seeming determination to discredit the Revised Standard Version, are about to discard all objective bases of establishing and interpreting the Bible text?

Objectivity is the only safeguard we have in this world to protect the Word of God which has been committed into our care. If we renounce the objective methods of scholarship because they, for example, dispute the right of John 7:53-8:11 to be in the text, we shall lose the objective methods to prove that John 3:16 or John 14 belong in the text. If we renounce the objective methods of scholarship because they question the word "virgin" in Isaiah 7:14, we shall lose the only basis we have for establishing such words as "propitiate" and "sanctify" instead of "expiate" and "consecrate"—or any other words basic to our faith.

What happens to the Revised Standard Version is of no great import. The Church seems to be able to get along with a poor translation (witness the Septuagint) or to ignore a good translation (witness the American Standard Version). What happens to objective methods of scholarship is of great importance. Nothing less than the future of evangelical biblical scholarship is at stake.

At present my family and I are reading through the RSV as a part of our

daily devotional periods. Four of us read in the RSV, the fifth member follows along in the AV. The other night we read this in the AV: "From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous. But I said, My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me! the treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously; yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously" (Isa. 24:16). "My leanness, my leanness?" What a relief to read that part of the verse in the RSV, "I pine away, I pine away. Woe is me!"

Wilhelm Schmidt, Founder of the Columbus Seminary

By Paul H. Buehring

IN OCTOBER of this year the American Lutheran Church celebrated the 125th anniversary of the opening of its Columbus Seminary, the first Lutheran seminary west of the Allegheny Mountains. With an enrollment of 200 students and a faculty of ten professors today, this seminary has come to take its place among the larger theological schools of the Lutheran church in this country. It may seem somewhat strange that the man who more than any other was instrumental in the founding of this seminary should be so little known and so rarely mentioned in the annals of American Lutheranism. In part this may be due to the brevity of his career, in part also to the fact that the original source material concerning him available in this country is limited almost entirely to the printed minutes of the Joint Synod of Ohio covering a period of only about one decade. In the following pages an attempt is made to reconstruct the story of the founder of the Columbus Seminary.[1]

The date was Tuesday, June 8, 1830. In a modest little church in the town of Zanesville, Ohio, nineteen ministers and sixteen lay delegates were holding the thirteenth annual convention of the Ohio Synod, the first Lutheran church body west of the Alleghenies, organized only twelve years before at Somerset, Ohio. One of the most urgent and also the most difficult problems with which the synod had wrestled ever since its founding was how to provide adequate training for the future ministers of the church. The traditional practice of having young men read theology privately under the tutelage of older and experienced men was proving more and more inadequate. Several times the question of establishing a regular institution for this purpose had been raised, but always the problem of financing it and of finding a capable teacher for it had seemed insurmountable to these humble pastors and people on the western frontier of the young nation.

But the Zanesville convention, held in full view of the approaching 300th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession and the birthday of the Lutheran Church, June 25, 1830, seems to have found inspiration in the heroic faith of the fathers. It faced the situation resolutely and did something about it. The question was

1 All direct quotations are from the Minutes of the Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States, a complete set of which may be found in the archives of the American Lutheran Church kept at Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa; another set, nearly complete, is in the library of the Evangelical Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio.

brought to a head when a letter from Dr. E. T. Hazelius, president of the Lutheran Synod of New York, was read, in which he extended a friendly invitation to the brethren in the "West" to send their young divinity students to Hartwick Seminary in New York. Here is the response of the synod to that invitation as recorded in the minutes. After thanking the "Rev. Doctor" for his courtesy, it declared that

> . . . it is the special desire of the Church in the West to have an institution for the education of our ministry within her own borders, where her interests might generally concentrate, and from whence, as from a fountainhead, the doctrines of the Augsburg Confession of Faith might be promulgated, literally, purely and unadulteratedly, and the mild and tolerant spirit of our discipline shed abroad its benign influence; and where the characteristics of Lutheranism, which neither malice nor art can destroy nor time efface, might be preserved.[2]

As for the cost of establishing and maintaining such an institution, the brethren encouraged one another to contemplate

> the wonderful work wrought by the faithful Francke in Germany, who, with eleven gulden (or 4 dollars and 40 cents) laid the foundation of the Orphan Asylum at Halle, in which the hand of Divine Providence was so manifestly evident; and which, as a most valuable precedent, should, when we establish an institution designed for the promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom, encourage us, without waivering, to rely upon that God with whom all things are possible, and who in his holy Word said, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness."[3]

As if in answer to their prayers Wilhelm Schmidt, a young pastor from Canton, Ohio, came forward and volunteered to take charge of the institution for two years without remuneration, and several ministers and laymen offered to solicit books for a library from their friends in Germany. Having thus in definite prospect the two essential elements of an institution of learning, a faculty and a library, the synod on the following day, June 9, 1830, passed the formal resolution "that an institution for the education of young men for the ministry be erected" and "that this institution be entitled 'The Theological Seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Ohio.'" On October 1 of the same year the seminary was opened in Professor Schmidt's parsonage in Canton with one professor and two students.

Who was this young man, Wilhelm Schmidt, who when no one else could be found had so modestly volunteered to assume this position of honor and responsibility, though at the time he was not yet quite twenty-seven years old?

2 *Minutes of the Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States* (English), 1830, p. 9. (These minutes will hereafter be cited as *OSM.*)

3 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

He was born in Germany, in the kingdom of Württemberg, December 11, 1803, the son of a Lutheran pastor. He got his collegiate training at the Gymnasium or Latin School at Meiningen, where he excelled particularly in the ancient languages. In 1823 he entered the University of Halle. After three years he graduated there with high honors. He was offered a position as private tutor in the family of a British consul in the Canary Islands but declined it. Instead, he came with a younger brother to the United States, following two older brothers who had come the year before. In Philadelphia, for a short time, he edited a German newspaper, but soon went with two of his brothers to Holmes County, Ohio, about 75 miles southwest of Cleveland, where the three brothers purchased some government land and laid out the town of Winesburg, and Wilhelm Schmidt was instrumental in organizing several congregations. The next year, 1827, the Canton, Ohio, parish, consisting of six congregations, called the young candidate as its pastor, though he had not yet been ordained. Since this parish belonged to the young Ohio Synod, Schmidt appeared at the next convention of the synod in 1828 and applied for membership. The committee appointed to examine his papers reported that it had examined the following documents:

a) A certificate of dismissal from the University of Halle, signed by Chancellor Niemeyer, testifying that he had attended the theological and philosophical lectures with praiseworthy diligence and at all times conducted himself in a manner above approach.

b) Letters of recommendation from Prof. Dr. Gesenius and Prof. Dr. Niemeyer. The latter recommends him to all friends of missions and testifies that he has learned to know him as a most commendable man [*auf das rühmlichste bekannt geworden sei*] during his stay of three years at Halle, both as to his diligence and his irreproachable conduct.

c) A very favorable letter of recommendation from Dr. A. H. Muhlenberg, President of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Pennsylvania.[4]

The ministerium of the Ohio Synod thereupon resolved: "That on the basis of the good testimonials submitted by him, Mr. Wilhelm Schmidt be granted a candidate's license." This license was renewed the following year; and the next year, at the Zanesville convention, Schmidt was ordained, and at the same convention, as we have seen, he was chosen as the professor for the seminary about to be established.

With his German university background Schmidt had pretty clear ideas about the curriculum which the seminary was to offer. The very next morning after the resolution to establish a seminary was adopted, he presented to the synod what he called his "Plan of Teaching" [*Lehrplan*] or course of studies, which was

4 C. Spielmann, *Abrisz der Geschichte der ev. luth. Synode von Ohio u. a. Staaten* (Columbus, 1880), p. 23. Cf. *OSM* (English), 1830.

intended to cover a period of three years and accordingly was divided into three sections, as follows:

First Cursus

Instruction, 1. In the German language
2. In the Latin language
3. In the Greek language
4. Logic
5. Theological Encyclopedia

Note: Whereas it is impracticable to acquire, during the term of three years, in connexion with the above-mentioned sciences, a knowledge of the Hebrew language also, therefore only those who attend the institution four years will receive instruction in the Hebrew and classic Greek languages.

Second Cursus

1. Continuation of instruction in languages in general
2. Introduction into the Old and New Testament
3. Archaeology
4. Explanation of the New Testament in the Greek language
5. Explanation of the Old Testament in the German language with constant reference to the Hebrew original text and the Septuagint
6. Church History
7. Empiria Psychology

Third Cursus

1. Continuation of the explanation of the Bible in the Greek and German languages
2. Dogmatics, connected with the history of Dogmas and Symbolics
3. Christian Ethics
4. Practical explanation of the Holy Scriptures, calculated for religious instruction
5. Homiletics, or pulpit eloquence
6. Catechetics, or the art of imparting religious instruction by questions and answers
7. Pastoral Theology and Liturgics[5]

The synod, of course, approved this course of studies, but we have no way of ascertaining to what extent it was carried out with a student body nearly all of whom entered with only the most elementary preparation. Schmidt opened the fall semester October 1, 1830, with two students in his parsonage in Canton, Ohio.

During the course of the first year the enrollment increased to about a half-dozen, and with these and his young bride Rebecca, nee Bockius, of Canton, Schmidt moved to Columbus during the summer of 1831. Here he took charge of a parish of four congregations: Columbus, Hoelzel's (about six miles southeast of Columbus), Reidenour's (about ten miles northeast), and Delaware (thirty miles north). The seminary having thus also moved to Columbus, Professor Schmidt taught his classes in what is described as a "little, low frame church" on Third Street while the students lived and boarded wherever they could find accommoda-

5 *OSM* (English), 1830, p. 14 f.

tions. It was not until after New Year, 1833, that the seminary could occupy a home of its own.

The first seminary property was located on South High Street, just outside the then southern limits of the little city of about 3,000 inhabitants and about a half-mile from the center of the town. Here the seminary board, elected in 1831, bought a plot of fourteen acres for $1,400.00, four of which it sold soon afterward to Professor Schmidt for $400.00. On the remaining ten acres the first seminary building was erected during the summer and fall of 1832. It was a plain brick structure 50 feet long, 28 feet wide, two stories high, with a two-story wing 18 x 20 feet. By August 15, 1832, building operations had progressed to a point where the cornerstone could be laid. This was done with considerable ceremony, with addresses by the Rev. John Wagenhals, secretary of the board, and the Rev. Mr. Weiss, a Reformed minister, while the Hon. Gustavus Swan, a prominent resident of Columbus, spoke for the community.[6] By January, 1833, the lower story was ready for occupancy; it contained one classroom and three small living rooms for Professor Schmidt and his family. The student body now consisted of nine theological students plus several others who studied languages only. Five or six of the out-of-town students slept in the unfinished and unheated upper story of the building and for a while prepared their own meals in the basement at a cost of 40 to 50 cents a week.[7] A little later, eight of the students rented two log cabins, near the seminary, which had formerly been occupied by Negroes. Two lived in the smaller one, which had only one room. The other six, together with the family of one of them, J. A. Roof, took the larger one, where they also boarded at Mrs. Roof's table. "Here we six," one of them later remembered, "pursued our studies in a little room, sitting around a table with a tallow candle in the center; and under the low roof of the log cabin we rolled into our beds and slept."[8] The upper floor of the seminary building, where the students were to live, was not finished until 1841, two years after Schmidt died.

Here, amid such humble surroundings and with such inadequate equipment, Professor Schmidt labored earnestly to carry out the curriculum approved by the synod. It was indeed a laborious task; what made it all the more laborious was the fact that his students came with about as many different degrees of preparation for theological study as there were individuals, and the further fact that only a few of them had any adequate knowledge of the German language, so that from the very beginning he was forced to do most of his teaching and lecturing in both German and English. Nevertheless, one gets the impression that under Pro-

6 Columbus, with a population of about 3,000, contributed $2,501.15. Cf. *OSM* (English), 1833, p. 21.

7 C. Spielmann, in an article in *Lutherische Kirchenzeitung* (Pittsburgh, Pa.), January 19, 1843.

8 C. Spielmann, *Abriss* etc., p. 62.

fessor Schmidt's tutelage the students did very fine work. Several of the men trained by him rose to positions of great influence and leadership in the Ohio Synod, notably Christian Spielmann and William F. Lehmann, both of whom later came to hold various presidential offices, including that of Capital University. In 1832, while the seminary building was being built and when the synod held its annual convention in Columbus, a public examination was held in the presence of the entire synod, in which the students demonstrated their achievements in the German, Latin, and Greek languages and eight of them delivered orations on various subjects connected with the history of the Lutheran Reformation. The minutes of that convention report: "The specimens which the students gave of their progress made in the acquisition of the different languages were highly creditable to them as well as to their teacher. The orations . . . attracted the attention of all present and met with general applause."[9] This is all the more remarkable when one remembers that at this time Schmidt had been teaching these students for only about one or one-and-a half years and was still meeting his classes in the "little low frame church" on Third Street.

The burden of responsibilities resting on the shoulders of the lone professor was indeed a heavy one, especially since at the same time he was also serving as pastor of four congregations. As far as the records show, he had no assistance in his work except during the two years from 1832 to 1834. In February, 1832, a Mr. Adolphus Conrad arrived in Columbus from Germany. He had enjoyed a thorough classical education, in fact had already taken up the study of law in the old country. Schmit put him to work teaching the language courses while at the same time he studied theology under Schmidt's direction. But when in the spring of 1834 Conrad had completed his theological course and entered the ministry, Schmidt again had to carry the whole teaching load alone, and he did so for the remaining years of his life.

One of the constant worries of the man in charge of the young institution was the problem of adequate financing. The student body was small, and except for the few local students who enrolled in the language courses, the students paid no tuition. The seminary land and building (in its incomplete state) had cost $4,264.44 when, about New Year, 1833, the professor and his students moved in. Of this sum $3,096.82 had been collected, leaving a debt of $1,167.62. But in 1833 the contributions fell off alarmingly and finally ceased altogether. The board had to borrow $600.00 in order to make the final payment on the land and clear the title. By 1839 there was still a debt of $694.00 resting on the seminary. The professor's salary, after the first two years during which he taught gratis, was $250.00 per year, of which he was paid $150.00 in cash while $100.00 a year was credited on the purchase price of the four acres he had bought from the board

9 *OSM* (English), 1832, p. 11.

in 1832. It is no wonder that, as one who lived through that period reported, "in those early years the board often met in an atmosphere of deep gloom because of the uncertainties of the future. But it was always Schmidt who buoyed them up saying, 'Let us not lose courage; let us hold on and work on, and our cause will not fail.' "[10]

Another problem was that of providing for the physical necessities of the students who were preparing for the ministry. Nearly all of them were poor, so poor that they could contribute little or nothing toward their own support and were entirely dependent on the charity of their friends in the community and throughout the church. Of course, at a time when a quarter of venison could be bought in Columbus for 25 cents, when eggs were sold for 3 or 4 cents a dozen and butter for 6 to 8 cents a pound,[11] it did not cost so much to board a group of 15 to 20 students; in fact, as late as 1842 the seminary could advertise that the charges for "board, room, and laundry" were only $1.25 a week. Nevertheless, it happened more than once that a student had to drop out of school because he could not afford to stay, and such losses of fine potential material for the ministry so sorely needed in the church of that day must have caused much grief to the devoted and consecrated professor.

Professor Schmidt died November 3, 1839. A man of slight physique and frail health, he had literally worn himself out in a few short years in his dual capacity as professor of the seminary and pastor of a scattered parish of four congregations. Already in 1837 his health had broken down and he was forced to take a year's leave of absence from his post for a trip to the fatherland and a visit with his aging father. Returning in June, 1838, he threw himself into his work again with such reckless abandon that his weak constitution broke down again within a year. In October, 1839, he suffered an attack of typhoid fever, and two weeks later he died.

Wilhelm Schmidt must have been in some respects a remarkable man, whose personality and influence in the young Ohio Synod and the infant seminary can be fairly well reconstructed from the references to him in the printed minutes of the synod. In the English minutes of the Western District for 1840 we find a biographical sketch of him, probably written by his intimate friend, the Rev. John Wagenhals, who served several terms as president of the Ohio Synod and as secretary of the seminary board. In this sketch Schmidt's character is described as follows:

> Professor Schmidt possessed profound learning without attempting to shine, and genuine piety without pretension. With Christian humility he sought to know his own heart, discover its weaknesses, and by divine aid to grow in grace daily. With similar sentiments he always

10 C. Spielmann, in an article in *Lutherische Kirchenzeitung*, February 2, 1843.
11 O. C. Hooper, *History of the City of Columbus, Ohio, 1797-1920*, p. 39.

confided in the promises of God, endured the evils of this life with filial submission, and looked to eternity with all those exalted and holy hopes which religion alone can inspire. Hence he diligently labored, with a willing and self-sacrificing spirit, amid many bodily evils to which he was subject. Conscientiously fulfilling every duty and exhibiting the strictest integrity, he was, in the noblest sense of the word, an honest man. As a natural consequence, he was courteous to all, ready to assist by word and deed, and solicitous to secure the happiness of all.[12]

We are not surprised, therefore, to find that the natural modesty and sincerity of his character, his uniformly courteous and winsome behavior, and his never-failing helpfulness won him many friends and admirers, both in the church and in the community. One of his warmest friends was the Rev. Dr. James Hoge, who had organized the first Presbyterian church in Columbus in 1805 and was its minister for over fifty years. It was Dr. Hoge who delivered the eulogy on behalf of the community at Schmidt's funeral.

As a professor, so his biographer tells us in the sketch already referred to, Schmidt

. . . possessed peculiar qualifications for his office, combining with unwearied activity all the requisite talents and requirements. He was not only learned as a theologian and philologist, but was intimately acquainted with other branches of science. He was endowed with a happy talent to communicate knowledge, and, possessing a powerful mind, could so skillfully clothe his thoughts in words that while he opened to those who received instruction from him all the stores of learning, his lectures and addresses were of the most popular character, clear and intelligible to all. The evidences of the success of his labors are found in those ministers and students who enjoyed the privilege of receiving instruction from him.[13]

It remains for us to determine, as well as we may, the type of Lutheranism represented by this founder and first professor of the Columbus seminary and inculcated by him in his students. Schmidt was born and raised in a Lutheran parsonage in the South-German state of Württemberg. His father no doubt was a member of the Lutheran state church of Württemberg, which at the time of Schmidt's childhood and youth was not noted for any particular sort of strict confessional Lutheranism. In fact, in 1823, the year young Schmidt entered the University of Halle, the Württemberg state church formed a union with the Reformed church with full inter-communion at the Lord's Table. Moreover, ever since the days of Spener and Francke the pietistic movement had gained many adherents in that state, where the better type of that movement was represented by such men as Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752), the noted commentator on the New Testament. It was almost inevitable, then, that young Schmidt should carry with him from his father's parsonage to Halle, and thence to America and to the Columbus seminary, a type of Lutheranism that was strongly influenced by the theological climate surrounding him in his youth. The introspective nature of his spiritual life as pictured by his biographer in the quotation above finds its

12 *OSM*, Western District (English), 1840, p. 15.
13 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

natural explanation, at least in part, in the environment of his youth, as does also the mild and unionistic type of Lutheranism he represented in the seminary and the community.

When Schmidt matriculated in the theological department of the University of Halle, that department had reached the zenith of its fame and popularity. The theological faculty consisted of some twenty men, who lectured to more than 900 students. Among the professors there were scholars of international reputation, notably among them Wilhelm Gesenius, the famous expert in Semitic languages, whose Hebrew grammar and lexicon are still considered classic by some today. He was a philologist rather than a theologian, and his courses were taken by many non-theological students, so that in the two regular courses which he offered each semester he had over 1,000 students. The chancellor of the university was August Hermann Niemeyer, named after his great-grandfather August Hermann Francke. Like Gesenius, Niemeyer, too, was a man of international reputation. He was also the director of the Franckean Institutions in Halle. Then there were Johann Carl Thilo, a friend of Gesenius and a protegé of Niemeyer, who had traveled in England and become a member of the Masonic order there, an expert in the New Testament and New Testament apocrypha; Georg Christian Knapp, a deeply devout Christian who perpetuated the best of the old Halle pietism, also an expert in the New Testament; August Ludwig Wegscheider, among those mentioned the only out-and-out rationalist and characterized in Meusel's *Handlexikon* as "the leading dogmatician of the vulgar-rationalistic school of thought,"[14] whose Dogmatics ran through no less than eight editions; and others.

We have no way of knowing just which ones in this galaxy of stars the young divinity student selected as his professors; but it is obvious that he came in close personal contact with at least two of them, Gesenius and Niemeyer, for he presented highly favorable testimonials from both when he applied for membership in the Ohio Synod in 1828. What, then, was the type of theology which Schmidt developed under the influence of these men of the Halle faculty?

In the first place, it was thoroughly scholarly, scientific. Schmidt was by far the best informed theologian in the Ohio Synod during the brief period of his life in that synod, and he was respected as such by his brethren. In 1833 a young graduate of a German university, who had recently come to the United States and had met with difficulties in getting admitted to the Maryland Synod, applied for membership in the Ohio Synod. He was duly examined and admitted. The secretary of the Ohio Synod, the self-styled "Bishop" Schweizerbarth, noted for his sharp tongue and his outspoken manner, took occasion to add the following footnote to this items in the minutes:

> The Synod of Ohio has always been distinguished most gloriously by its liberal spirit, which is equally free from suspicion regarding orthodoxy and from jealousy because of thorough

14 Cf. also Hauck's *Realencyclopädie*, Vol. 21, p. 34.

scholarship. Thanks be to Providence, which has granted us our worthy Professor in the seminary at Columbus, who is not overtaken by an intellectual coma at the sight of an immigrated theologian, and who accordingly has no occasion to blacken such a man's character as a neologian and rationalist, either because he fears to examine him or because he is envious of him.[15]

But what about Schmidt's more personal attitude toward the Lutheran faith and practice? There was a saying current in the intellectual circles of Germany before Schmidt's time: *Halam tendis, aut pietista aut atheista reversurus* ("Go to Halle and you will come back either a pietist or an atheist"). To what extent this quip still applied in the 1820's may be a matter of opinion; certainly Schmidt did not come away from Halle as an atheist but rather as a confirmed Lutheran with pietistic leanings. His pietism was that of the older, Franckean type; his Lutheranism was mild, tolerant, emphasizing the ecumenical aspects of Christianity rather than the distinctive doctrines of Lutheranism. In both respects he fitted very nicely into the pattern of the Ohio Synod of his day. His love for the Lutheran Church and his loyalty to her Confessions is evident from the fact that it was he who wrote into the first constitution of the seminary the requirement that its professors must "profess pure Lutheran principles as they are contained in the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church," and that they must "set forth the doctrines of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in conformity to the orthodox faith and adhere strictly to the original and established usages of said church . . ."[16] while his lack of comprehension of, and appreciation for, these distinctive doctrines and practices of his church are seen in the fact that he engaged to educate both Lutheran and Reformed candidates for the ministry in their respective churches, that as pastor he served a union congregation in Columbus composed of Lutheran and Reformed communicants, and that the principle lated enunciated in the Galesburg Rule and generally acknowledged by Lutheran church bodies today, "Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran ministers only; Lutheran altars for Lutheran communicants only," was utterly foreign to him.

Such a man was Wilhelm Schmidt, the father and founder of the Evangelical Lutheran Seminary of the American Lutheran Church in Columbus, Ohio. His earthly remains were laid to rest in Greenlawn Cemetery in Columbus, where his grateful former students in 1852 erected a monument over his grave which is still standing today and which bears the simple inscription,

WILHELM SCHMIDT
1803-1839
Unser Lehrer, Unser Vater

15 *OSM* (German), 1833, p. 17.

16 The constitution of the seminary appeared in official English translation in *OSM* (English), 1842, pp. 35-42.

Life and Thought in World Lutheranism

Relations of the Churches of Finland and England

On the evening of Ascension Day, May 19, 1955, the archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Fisher, broadcast a special message over the BBC to the Church of Finland assembled for the celebration of the latter's 800th anniversary. Archbishop Fisher referred to the pioneer missionary Bishop Henrik, an Englishman who brought the Christian faith to Finland, and to the fact that in recent times this early historic bond has been recognized and strengthened. Bishop S. F. Allison, the archbishop's personal representative, delivered an official greeting to the Church of Finland and spoke of the strong ties between the two churches, particularly of the love of freedom based on the Christian faith.

It is of interest from the standpoint of ecumenical discussion to note that the cultivation of closer relations between the Church of England and the Church of Finland is based not on general good will alone but on official documents drawn up some twenty years ago. The following excerpts (from *Englannin ja Suomen kirkkojen suhteet,* Turku, 1948) reveal the discussion in regard to apostolic succession and a valid ministry and describe the bases for an exchange of episcopal visits and for intercommunion.

From a "Resolution of the Convocation of Canterbury," June 6, 1935:

"Having learnt from the archbishop of Turku (Abo) that he has authority, after consultation with the Conference of Bishops of the Church of Finland and with the agreement of its Church Assembly, to seek closer relations with the Church of England in response to the archbishop of Canterbury's invitation, this house welcomes the approach thus made and expresses the hope that in due course complete intercommunion, based on a common episcopal ministry, may be achieved.

"Further, and as a means toward such a complete unity, this house . . . is of the opinion: (1) That, if the archbishop of Turku (Abo) shall invite the archbishop of Canterbury to appoint a bishop to take part in the consecration of a bishop in the Church of Finland, he may commission a bishop for such a purpose; (2) That members of the Church of Finland may be admitted to Communion in the Church of England. . . ."

From the reply of Archbishop Erkki Kaila of the Church of Finland, March 10, 1936:

"When Your Grace kindly took the initiative for a discussion of the relations between the Churches of England and Finland, my predecessor, the late Archbishop Ingman, welcoming the Anglican delegation to Finland, was able to state that 'no difficulties of principle exist from the point of view of the Church of Finland, so far as it is possible to see it beforehand.' . . . Now, with the result of the conversations before us, it is a great joy to notice the fundamental agreement in

Christian doctrine. . . . For us Lutherans this is the main point, as we are interested, not so much in the human channels of God's grace, i.e., in questions of church organization, as in the divine message of the salvation of the world, the proclamation of which has been entrusted to us. . . . In all relations with foreign churches we feel bound to emphasize that the most precious pearl of the church, the Gospel of God's undeserved love toward sinners and of his forgiving and renewing grace, should be kept pure. We gladly acknowledge that, in spite of differences of emphasis during the conversations, there is a fundamental agreement in doctrine. We find that the doctrine of justification by faith is also clearly stated in the Church of England, especially by the Thirty-nine Articles and the Book of Common Prayer. . . .

"There is another point, however, where greater differences appear. I mean the question of church order. . . . It is certainly also very important that the proved and venerable historical methods of church government be preserved. . . . Having said this, however, I must point out that we cannot in principle look upon the historic episcopate, on which the Anglican Church lays such great stress, as a *conditio sine qua non* for a valid ministry without abandoning our fundamental doctrinal basis. I might refer here to the Reply of the Lutheran Bishops of Sweden in the year 1923, where they say: 'No particular organization of the church and of its ministry is instituted *iure divino*. . . . The value of every organization of the *ministerium ecclesiasticum*, and of the church in general, is only to be judged by its fitness and ability to become a pure vessel for the supernatural contents and a perfect channel for the way of divine revelation to mankind.' . . . The Church of Finland has invited bishops from neighboring churches in Sweden and Estonia to her consecrations, not in order to restore her broken outward succession but, 'above all, as an act by which both churches witnessed to the unity of the Body of Christ.' We shall be happy to welcome an Anglican bishop to a Finnish consecration . . . on the understanding that reciprocity follow. . . ."

"Finnish church law permits the pastors of the Church of Finland to administer to Christians of other confessions the holy rites of our church in cases when they are voluntarily asked for. . . . It appears that at present nothing hinders Anglican communicants from communing in our churches when they wish to do so. We welcome them heartily to the Lord's table. With great gratitude we shall duly inform our parishes of the decisions of the Anglican Church regarding the right of our communicants to commune in the Anglican Church. . . ."

J. W. Heikkinen

New Developments in Sweden

A new bishop of the diocese of Strängnäs was appointed in February, 1955. He is the former dean of the cathedral, Dr. Gösta Lundstrom. He succeeds the bishop emeritus, Gustav Aulén, and Dr. Dick Helander who was removed from the office after a sensational trial in which he was found guilty of having slandered the other candidates for the office in a series of

anonymous letters. Dr. Helander has recently published a book in which he reviews the case and maintains his innocence.

In this year's *riksdag* (parliament) two questions rather vital for the church have been discussed. The first was on a motion that a general plebiscite be held in 1957 to determine whether the people of Sweden would favor a separation of church and state. The debate was short, and the motion was voted down, principally on the basis that the alternatives ought to be clarified first so that the people could vote intelligently. The second was a motion to recommend to the church assembly that steps be taken to enable women to become pastors in the church of Sweden. The motion was adopted. This question has been discussed heatedly for some time. Bishop Bo Giertz is reported to have maintained that admitting women to the office of the ministry is clearly contrary to Scripture.

A new plan of study for theological candidates and teachers of Christianity has been adopted this year. The course leading to the degree of "theological candidate" (B.D.) is divided into two parts. The first part is a survey of the traditional subjects in the theological curriculum. In this part survey "courses" will be available to the student, which will serve to introduce him to the whole range of theological studies. The second part will be a more intensive study of these studies, in which the student will work more independently. Examinations in Hebrew and Greek will remain obligatory for theological candidates but not for teachers of Christianity. For the degree of *teologie licentiat* (S.T.M.) the student has to take an examination in one subject (such as Church History) and present a thesis. After having taken the B.D. degree, the candidate has to spend at least two months in parish service and one semester in the study of practical theology. The new plan is designed to meet the needs of the present-day student more adequately and to shorten the time required for the B.D. degree.

A new book has been published in Sweden this year which probably will cause considerable discussion. It is a book by Gustaf Wingren, successor to Bishop Nygren as professor of Systematic Theology in the University of Lund. The title of the book is *Teologiens metodfråga* (The Problem of Method in Theology). It is a critical examination of the method of approach to the biblical material employed by the three great, contemporary theologians, Nygren, Barth, and Bultmann. His criticism of Nygren will no doubt evoke considerable discussion in Sweden. His main point is that Nygren's combination of a critical philosophy of religion, which establishes the fundamental and categorical question of religion, and motif research, which is the answer to this categorical question, is a method of approach which prevents a clear and correct understanding of the biblical material. The same criticism is leveled at the other two theologians. The author avoids all personal references and gives due credit to the eminent scholarship of these three men, but his criticism is incisive and devastating. The book may possibly open up a new era in the approach to biblical truth.

The agreement between the Church

of Sweden and the Church of England in regard to pulpit and altar fellowship does not seem to have caused any reaction in Sweden. No report on this has been found in the church papers available to the writer. The Church of England some years ago recognized the Church of Sweden as having apostolic succession, but the Church of Sweden takes the position that apostolic succession is not an essential mark of the church. Since the two churches are geographically remote, the agreement is largely for the convenience of individual travelers.

ERIC WAHLSTROM

WERNER ELERT, THEOLOGIAN

One of Germany's leading theologians and most noteworthy exemplar in this century of the so-called Erlangen theology was Werner Elert. His death on Nov. 21, 1954, came while he was in the midst of preparing a definitive history of Christian doctrine based on extensive research in the Greek as well as Latin Fathers.

From 1923 until his retirement in 1953 he was a mainstay on the University of Erlangen faculty as professor of historical theology. Known in America largely through his *Outline of Christian Doctrine* (1927), as translated by Charles M. Jacobs, his four major works still await discovery or utilization in this country. Not as prolific a writer as some others, Elert's work was solid and incisive, reflecting disciplined scholarship.

His first major work, *Der Kampf um das Christentum* (1921), portrayed evangelical Christianity, since the days of Hegel and Schleiermacher, locked in struggle against the forces of secular culture. He challenged the validity of efforts seeking to synthesize the Christian faith with modern culture, for he interpreted the latter as being in a state of decline as well as in basic opposition to the Gospel. He therefore warned that only in so far as Christianity differentiated itself from current trends would it survive and fulfill its purpose among men. With this book his stature was recognized and his influence as a teacher began.

Elert's second major contribution was his two-volume *Morphologie des Luthertums* (1931, 1932), which was reprinted in 1952. In it he depicted Lutheranism in its ever-changing historical forms. Amid the many variable factors, he believed to ascertain a constant factor which he found to be not static but dynamic. He called it the evangelical *Ansatz,* or fundamental point. He interpreted this *Ansatz* in terms of Luther's understanding of human existence, first as under the wrath of God, and then as under the Gospel. The practical application of this insight to successive historical situations fills the second volume with an unexcelled description of the social teachings and social influences of Lutheranism. Touching on many lands and working with a wide variety of sources, it may be pardoned that his treatment of Lutheranism in America leaves something to be desired. Yet the value of this work as a resource is highlighted by the fact that some of the chapters, like the one dealing with the history of marriage within Lutheranism, are actually monographs filled with material otherwise difficult of access.

Elert's accomplishments in sys-

tematic theology were illuminated by his third major work, *Der christliche Glaube* (1940). Here his kinship with nineteenth-century Erlangen theology is evident. In terms of what is today called existential thinking, Elert contends that "the basic prerequisite for the perception of God is a personal decision to take the risk" (p. 177). This is the risk of confident faith. Besides, Elert rejected the notion that dogmatics is a soliloquy of theology. His own treatment of dogmatics therefore begins with an analysis of how modern man understands himself, an understanding which at best shows man to be in relation to the *Deus absconditus*. And man can not love the hidden God without Christ (pp. 63, 133). In Christ God singles out man and confronts him with an inescapable claim. This confrontation places man in the paradox between Law and Gospel, the tension which Luther's theology conveys so vividly. In writing this work in dogmatics Elert made the first Lutheran rebuttal of real consequence against the theology of Karl Barth. For Barth had laid stress on the Word as such rather than on the paradox in the Word itself (pp. 60, 139, 162 f., 171). Elert later came back to this theme again in his characteristic and pointed essays, *Zwischen Gnade und Ungnade* (1948, pp. 132 ff.).

In his fourth major work, *Das christliche Ethos* (1949), Elert interpreted the field of ethics with this same emphasis on Law and Gospel. Avoiding both Roman Catholic and Calvinist concepts of Christ as the lawgiver, he sought to depict Christ as the master among his disciples. Christ places no impossible burden upon the shoulders of his followers. Rather, his burden is easy for those whom he helps by bearing the load with them (p. 87).

In words like the above, Elert's colleague, Paul Althaus, described his work. In many ways Elert had given Lutheran theology a fresh and timely expression. The fact that Elert had almost a sportsman's zest for hunting among old and forgotten sources for relevant facts, and then using them in a fresh manner, make his works anything but dull reading. In this way he could also put in a good word for Melanchthon, showing how the latter had given Luther the concept, *coram Deo* (in the presence of God) that became so meaningful in Luther's theology (*Ev. Lutherische Kirchenzeitung,* IX [April 1, 1955], 100-106).

Those who were privileged to know Elert also as a teacher understand how deeply he was concerned for world Lutheranism, and how in Germany and beyond he worked for Lutheran unity. He did not seek easy solutions but was intent upon laying solid foundations.

Church Institute of Social Welfare in Heidelberg

While the reform of the theological curriculum at the German universities remains a deferred hope, the opening of the Scientific Institute of Diaconics at Heidelberg on February 18, 1954, brought theological education in Germany an important step nearer to the problems of contemporary society. Housed by the University, the Institute is attached to the theological faculty as a part of the functional field. Support for the Institute, as well as sponsorship, comes jointly from the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD),

the Central Committee of Inner Missions, the Central Office of the EKD Hilfswerk, the Evangelical Church in Baden, and the Baden Inner Mission League. Dr. Herbert Krimm, director of the Institute, is a member of the theological faculty in addition to being head of the Hilfswerk operations in Stuttgart. Top EKD officials, including Bishop Otto Dibelius, took part in the dedication.

In response to a need which has been widely felt in those theological circles which are also socially sensitive, the Institute's two-year study program is designed to give future pastors and other students broad insights and practical know-how in social welfare and Christian action. A basic premise is that sound evangelical theology requires effective social concern, and that such concern must be able to make itself felt amid the complexities of modern society.

A variety of influences has contributed to the founding of the Institute. The postwar ecumenical partnership in relief and reconstruction has been a major influence. Within that context the newly revived sense of social responsibilities among Lutherans in Germany, and also in America, has been influential. Yet it should not be overlooked that a century ago Johann Hinrich Wichern, organizing genius of Germany's Inner Mission, appealed to the authorities that the universities—especially the theological faculties—should help to train men who would be able to give leadership in the church's social task. This plea went largely unheard, but it had a long echo. Individual professors, like the young Adolf Harnack, made a point of acquainting themselves and their students with concrete social problems and took part in conferences on church and society. From 1927 to 1935, in connection with the theological faculty at the University of Berlin, an institute similar to the one presently at Heidelberg functioned until smothered by Nazi pressures (Martin Gerhardt, *Ein Jahrhundert Innere Mission,* II, 315-320, 369, 372).

At the conclusion of its first year, the operation of the Institute in Heidelberg has been dramatized by an unexpectedly heavy student attendance at lectures and workshops. Consequently the work has been transferred to larger quarters. (Source: *Evangelische Welt, 1954,* 131, 476; *1955,* 195. Excerpts of the official description of the Institute and its study program, as provided by Dr. Krimm, follow.)

This Institute, like every other department of the University, functions in the interest of research and teaching, in this case with special reference to the diaconic task of the Evangelical church through charities, agencies, and social action.

The founders of the Institute proceed from the premise that in today's world special training is required for those who, in behalf of the church, are engaged in social service, welfare work, and social action. The Institute is therefore open to all students—not only in theology but also in medicine, law, and economics—who intend either to undertake the work of the Christian diaconate full-time or to cooperate in its services some other way. In addition to the lectures and workshops, the Institute undertakes and shares special research projects in the field of diaconics in

behalf of the church, and thus contributes to scholarly research in specific areas of service.

This Institute, like every other activity of the theological faculty, is under the direction of a faculty member. His responsibility is to bring together the necessary teaching staff and to see that the instruction follows a course of study approved by the faculty.

An advisory council is set up in order that representatives of the supporting agencies of the church might have a voice in the affairs of the Institute. In addition to a representative of the University's theological faculty, the following agencies each have one representative: the Council of the EKD, the Central Committee for Inner Missions, the Central Office of the EKD Hilfswerk, the Evangelical Church in Baden, and the Inner Mission League of Baden. The chairman of this advisory council is the EKD representative. The advisory council meets annually, at which time it receives a report on the work of the Institute and helps to determine policy regarding the course of study and the selection of a teaching staff.

The lectures and workshops of the Institute do not exceed a total of five hours per week. They are so structured and interrelated that one who takes this two-year program gains a comprehensive insight into the major fields of the church's diaconic service. The student is thus in a position to form an accurate picture of the principal questions as well as of the inner context of the diaconate. In limiting the curriculum of the Institute to five hours per week it should be possible for the student to carry this work along with his other studies. But it is also possible for those who have already graduated in their respective fields to attend the Institute. Besides, a student may elect any one course without being obligated to take the entire two-year program.

A certificate of attendance is given to those who complete the full program satisfactorily. Yet this certificate is not to be understood as a guarantee of employment by a social agency. Its purpose is simply to provide the student with credentials that may prove useful to prospective employers in Inner Mission and Hilfswerk agencies.

The two-year study program sponsored by the Institute throws further light on the nature and intent of this new venture.

FIRST SEMESTER

History of Diaconics (2 hours per week). A basic survey, along lines similar to those of Gerhard Uhlhorn's *History of Christian Charity,* covering the manifestations of Christian social concern in the various periods of church history. Special emphasis on the post-Reformation rise of secularism, and the emergence from it of modern public welfare services.

Fields and Methods of Public Welfare Work (1 hour per week). A survey of the range of public welfare services today, with special reference to health services, youth work, and economic assistance. A scrutiny of those branches of public welfare in which the diaconic service of the church is involved or directly concerned.

Case Studies in the Social Work of the Church (2 hours per week, workshop). A practical study of a variety of examples drawn from public welfare

and social politics, high-lighting the extent and diversity of the church's social work. Case studies include juvenile delinquency, expellees, refugee resettlement, traveler's aid, etc. Specialists in these several fields serve as guest lecturers and workshop leaders.

SECOND SEMESTER

The Church and the Social Question in the 19th Century (2 hours per week). A study of the Great Debate that broke out with the Year of Revolutions, 1848: on the one side, industrialization and its consequences, the rise of the working class, the consolidation of class consciousness, the Communist Manifesto, the person and work of Karl Marx; on the other, the efforts of leading churchmen like Wichern, von Ketteler, von Bodelschwingh, Stoecker, Naumann, and others. An examination of economic semantics, such as capital, incorporation, inflation, taxation, etc., as seen against the background of economic history.

Systems of Social Insurance (1 hour per week). A comparative study of the various possibilities of social insurance, along with an examination of the overlapping of valid systems operative today. The problem of the welfare state discussed with regard to the viewpoints of liberalism and totalitarianism. The need of a new and comprehensive reordering of social legislation, especially in line with current political discussion.

Voluntary Agencies and Institutional Work (2 hours per week, workshop). An examination of the institutional care of the blind, the handicapped, the aged, the chronically ill, the epileptics, the feeble minded, and others; done under the supervision of a competent leader in the actual work, with the assistance of specialists as guest lecturers.

THIRD SEMESTER

Social Pedagogy (2 hours per week). An investigation of the family as the nucleus essential to a healthy social order, and of the church and school as active agencies in social pedagogy. Also a study of forces dangerous to or destructive of this aspect of social order.

Social Medicine (1 hour per week). A treatment of medical questions that tie in with social concern and the care of souls in personal counseling; the influence of environmental factors in the realm of illness, the psycho-physical constitution of the body in relation to anthropology, therapy, psychical defects and their treatment, psychoanalysis, and the bearing of these matters on social hygiene and health legislation.

Youth Work (2 hours per week, workshop). An introduction to the theory and practice of remedial pedagogy, the training of youth workers, court work, psychiatric and other welfare services for youth. Field trips. Lectures by experts in the field.

FOURTH SEMESTER

The Church and Current Social Problems (2 hours per week). An examination of such current social problems as aid to expellees and refugees, the position of the church in regard to labor's right to a voice in management; international aspects of social prob-

lems, particularly in the light of ecumenical cooperation. A review of the social program of the several political parties. An estimate of the possible consequences which a vital diaconate might have on the life, constitution, worship, and further activities of the church.

The Legal Basis of Social Work (1 hour per week). A study of the valid legal basis for such matters as the regulation of welfare services, the equalization of wartime economic losses, the right of the individual to assistance and to work. Special attention given to church welfare services in relation to public welfare.

Persons and Methods in Social Work (2 hours per week, workshop). An examination of responsibilities which the qualified student, a potential leader in diaconic service, has toward his future co-workers: deaconesses and deacons, social workers, kindergarten and nursery workers, voluntary lay workers. Social case work, as developed in America, given special attention as an effective method of dealing with those in need. Guest lecturers assist.

E. Theodore Bachmann

Book Reviews and Notices[1]

The Interpreter's Bible, Volume IX (Acts, Romans). Nolan B. Harmon, Editor. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1954. 668 pages. $8.75.

Volume IX of The Interpreter's Bible contains the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans. The magnificent format of this 12 volume series, the two versions in parallel columns, the separate sections for exegesis and exposition, the scholarly introductions, the excellent type and paper, need no further elaboration here.

The Introduction and Exegesis of the Acts of the Apostles was done by G. H. C. Macgregor, Professor of Divinity and Biblical Criticism at the University of Glasgow. Harnack pointed out long ago that the Book of Acts has been the focal point of all the mistakes which have been made in New Testament Criticism. It is therefore a valuable Introduction that will reflect a careful analysis of all modern research, with sober conclusions which do not leap beyond the evidence. Macgregor's Introduction is of this character, and this reviewer found it fascinating reading.

The exegetical portion, by the same scholar, was of a somewhat different character. Acts being an historical book, the historicity of the events is an important consideration. Dr. Macgregor based his exegesis on the theory that the importance of the historical events described, particularly the miracles, is not to be found in their factual detail but in the light they throw on the ideas of the primitive community. For example: "For Paul . . . the Ascension, as symbolical of (Christ's) passage to heaven, was in fact identical with the Resurrection. . . . The silence of Matthew and Mark . . . suggest that the Ascension, as an event separate from the Resurrection, had no place in the most primitive tradition. . . . There can be no question that the Christians lived in daily expectation of 'miracles,' and may therefore well have experienced them" (p. 74).

The value of the miracles for expository preaching will be vastly different if they are considered a reflection of primitive thinking rather than as historical facts. This becomes very evident in the Exposition by Dr. Theodore P. Ferris (rector of Trinity Church in Boston), which is presumably based upon the exegetical section which precedes it on each page. The events described are considered useful for preaching merely because they give the expositor some bright ideas on various moral and religious subjects and afford him a "take off" point to emphasize some general moral and ethical principles. An Alger book, or Walter Lippman, or even the daily newspapers would serve the purpose just as well. There is no indication in this type of exposition that the "history" of the Book of Acts might be of a different character than secular history; there is no concept of a divine purpose originating the events or directing them toward a final goal, no single flaming message such as gripped the Apostle Paul, no intrinsic cohesion in the story with the rest of holy history, no help to the preacher who might be looking for some epic significance in these events for that day or their application to the needs of our day. Of course, if the event is something that just "happened" then its only value to the expositor is that it might give him a bright idea for a "sermon."

The difficulty of running a column of exposition separately from the exegesis also become apparent here, namely, that the commentator feels obliged to give homiletical hints on every verse or paragraph, with the result that he frequently misses the main point, or the historical connection, or the intrinsic value of the verse or paragraph in

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1 Books reviewed or noticed in these pages may be purchased through your church's publication house.

relation to the rest of the story, in his desire to find a preaching point. The text "reminds" him of something. Preachers are guilty too often of using a text for a pretext and do not need any encouragement along that line. The practice has become so well established in the more modern commentaries that it seems to be accepted as a sound homiletical principle, but is this Biblical Exposition?

The Introduction and Exegesis of the Epistle to the Romans, by John Knox, Baldwin Professor of Sacred Literature at Union Theological Seminary, is a scholarly and satisfying piece of work on the most important and most difficult of all the Epistles of Paul. The bias we have come to expect from Pauline scholars is noticeably absent. The critical and historical questions are dealt with in an objective manner seldom seen in either liberal or conservative commentaries.

Dr. Knox regards Chapter 16 as a pseudonymous addition to the Epistle, but presents a fair and objective analysis of the traditional view that the chapter represents the original conclusion to the Epistle, as well as of the so called "Ephesus conjecture," namely, that this chapter is the fragment of a lost letter to Ephesus. He attempts to base his exegesis of this chapter on the pseudonymous theory, "without neglecting the fact that neither of the alternative theories can be conclusively dismissed" (p. 654).

Furthermore, the expository section by Dr. Gerald R. Cragg, minister of Erskine and American United Church of Montreal, is based on the exegesis to a far greater degree than in the treatment of the Book of Acts. There is no attempt to explain away Paul, but rather a serious attempt to restate to this generation what Paul said to his own. There is sufficient homiletical value in the Exposition to justify the division between the Exegesis and the Exposition. We cannot help speculating as to whether there would not have been a better connection between these two sections if they had been written by the same scholar. If this had been attempted, it would seem almost inevitable that the net result would have been one section, containing both exegesis and expository hints.

CHRISTIAN PREUS

The Gospel According to St. John. By C. K. Barrett. Macmillan, 1955. 531 pages. $9.50.

New light from the manuscripts discovered in the Dead Sea caves since 1947 bids fair to make much that stands written in our Bible commentaries obsolete. The excitement created by these discoveries makes it all the more necessary to guard against onesided interpretations of the many-sided Gospel of John, and to remind ourselves that there was also a Hellenistic environment of this Gospel. What is needed is not an arbiter between the Aramaists and the Hellenists but a hospitality to truth wherever truth is found which will do justice to all the different views which scholars have taken of this most difficult of all the Gospels to interpret. The need for such a commentary is met by C. K. Barrett's *The Gospel according to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text,* which clarifies the issues and corrects the onesidedness of many of its predecessors.

After a careful survey of the evidence, Barrett concludes that a positive statement concerning the authorship of this Gospel "could only be a guess," but he offers the conjecture that the evangelist, the author of the epistles of John, and the final editor of the Revelation were all pupils of John the son of Zebedee, who, as a "son of Thunder," composed apocalypses. "They developed his work on similar lines, but it was the evangelist who saw most clearly how eschatological Christian theology could be re-expressed in the language of Hellenistic thought, and indeed saw this so clearly as to be far ahead of his time."

Thus our commentator presents the author of the Gospel of John as a missionary preacher who wrote at the end of the first century to insist, against Docetic and Gnostic trends, that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God in the flesh, and to tell the Church what it ought to be doing here on earth during the lengthening delay of Christ's second coming. He was a bold and original thinker whose primary purpose was not to write history for the sake of history but to interpret Jesus from a theological point of view. Barrett claims that John had read Mark,

and that a few of his statements may be most satisfactorily explained if he was familiar with matter peculiar to Luke. He handled his sources freely as a preacher would do, developing their implications in his own original manner, but without falsifying their theological significance.

Our commentary, therefore, rightly abandons the harmonistic effort to interpret the Gospel of John as a chronological outline of the ministry of Jesus, which has sometimes led even conservative scholars to resort to the hypothesis that certain leaves of the original Gospel have suffered accidental disarrangement. Our author proceeds on the sound principle that the first business of the interpreter is to see what sense can be made of the text as it stands, without recourse to conjectural corrections of hypothetical mistranslations from the Aramaic into the Greek, or to theories which involve a complicated process of more or less unintelligent editing. On this basis he offers an interpretation of the Gospel of John which is at least as good and generally better than that of scholars who cut the text to pieces and then rearrange them in order to arrive at a hypothetical original Gospel which may be nothing but a retailoring to fit the theological philosophy of the twentieth century critic. He examines fairly the arguments of those who find this Gospel full of mistranslations from the Aramaic, but his verdict is that the corrections which they have offered on this basis are not really necessary.

By his notes on the variants of the Greek text and by his careful handling of the Greek tenses, our author throws much light on the process of revelation which has given us the Gospel of John, and on the difficult problem of distinguishing elements which belong to the evangelist's own day from those which belong to the days of Jesus. He recognizes the influence of Christian preaching, worship, and missionary action on the shaping of this Gospel, and he deals judiciously with the symbolism which is characteristic of the evangelist's mode of thinking. Writing from the standpoint of "realized eschatology," he comes to grips with the fundamental problem of the church in the closing decades of the first century, but in doing so he takes issue with those who hold that the writer of the Gospel of John has substituted the conception that eternal life begins here and now for the Synoptic hope of an imminent second coming of Christ to establish his kingdom on earth. He thinks that, while stressing the newer conception, the evangelist retained the earlier hope but insisted that the church, under the power and guidance of the Spirit, must fulfill in this present world the missionary task which Jesus assigned to his disciples on Easter afternoon when he said, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you."

Progress in this task depends on the courage and willingness of Christians to develop the implications of what is said in John 14:12-17 and 16:12-15 about the promise of a never-ceasing, concurrent self-revelation of God through the Holy Spirit to his church. The evangelist who wrote these words was one of God's many preachers, through whom the glorified Christ was speaking a new word to a changing world at the end of the first century, when the increasing persecution suffered by the Christians combined with the continuing delay of the second coming of Christ to threaten the church with a spirit of discontent, disillusionment, and dismay.

Our commentator describes the evangelist's bold solution in terms of the "realized eschatology" which is being offered to us as the hope of the world of the twentieth century. But here the question arises whether the Spirit which Jesus breathed into his disciples on the first Easter afternoon has not been waiting to speak a new word to his Christians, if they will but hear it, concerning such issues as the ethics of the doctrine of predestination, the relation of the kingdom of God to history, and the belief in the possibility of progress toward an ideal social order on earth which is denied by the eschatological philosophy of history. Discussion of these issues does not fall within the purpose of this commentary, but the author has presented fairly the essential facts which must be taken into consideration in grappling with the problem of the motivation of Christian social action which is created by a theology which denies that

there can be any progress within history toward a kingdom of God "on earth as it is in heaven." What is needed is to follow the example of the writer of the Gospel of John and listen to the never-ceasing revelation of the Spirit as he did in his day.

This critical and theological commentary on the Gospel of John will, of course, not be the last word on the subject. The manuscript of the book left the author's hands on Dec. 31, 1951, and he was not able to incorporate consideration of the documents discovered in Palestine in and since 1947; but in a footnote to his preface he says that such consideration would not substantially have modified his work. Whatever the judgment of the future may be on this particular matter, his fair, well-balanced, and inclusive treatment of the Gospel of John will serve to keep the forthcoming discussions on the right track.

RAYMOND T. STAMM

A Study in St. Mark. By Austin Farrer. New York: Oxford University Press, 1952. 398 pages. $5.50.

Form Criticism focused attention on the way the interests of the early Christian community influenced the formation of the Gospel tradition. By analysis of individual pericopes it sought to show what factors had influenced selection of events and method of handling. Dr. Farrer develops these analytical techniques and extends them to the study of the structure of Mark's Gospel. Unlike Archbishop Carrington, who sought to discern a a catechetical and liturgical structure in the Gospel by reference to system of lections reconstructed from Codex Vaticanus, Farrer confines himself to the examination of Mark's Gospel and seeks to locate evidences of the Evangelist's literary methods. His presuppositions, however, are quite different from those of Form Criticism. The presence of miraculous events in the narrative is for most of the Form critics an indication of a late stage of development, for legendary elements have clustered about the supposed historical nucleus. The Evangelist's theological viewpoint must therefore be allowed for in reconstructing the historical facts upon which the narrative is based. This cleavage between historical criticism which seeks to get at the facts, and theological criticism which is concerned to establish the viewpoint of the Evangelist, is rejected by Farrer. He does not deny that Mark's Gospel presents the life of Jesus in a theological framework or in a set of theological symbols, but contends that the historical facts were such as to make the theological symbols appropriate. Moreover, the symbols are not the product of the capricious and uncontrolled imagination of the Evangelist but were taken by him from his environment in the Jewish religious tradition. Their use, furthermore, rests more likely upon Jesus' own self consciousness than upon an arbitrary interpretation of it imposed from without.

Detailed structural analysis leads Farrer to the conclusion that Mark's historical method is that of prefiguration. It is one which causes serious difficulties to modern interpreters, but it cannot be set aside as arbitrary any more than the modern biographer's bent for interpreting in terms of the interplay of circumstance, character, and purpose. It is an historical form, but one which grows out of the conviction that history is the arena of divine revelation. The Gospel history had unique importance in relation to previous history because it is the summing up of all that had previously taken place. All previous history prefigured Christ; likewise Christ is the prospective epitome of all that men are still to be and do. One may disagree with this interpretation of history, but, Farrer contends, for the proper exposition of Mark's Gospel it is essential to understand that this is what he is trying to assert.

The conclusions reached by structural analysis are tested by application to some of the long-standing difficulties of Marcan exposition. The question of the Messianic secret, the problem of the double narrative of the feeding of the multitude, the difficulty of the so-called "lost ending," and the various problems of the Passion narrative provide test cases. The inner consistency of the solutions indicate that while there may be differences of interpretation in details, in the main Farrer has grasped something of the logic of the Marcan historical method.

The book is not easy reading, and does not encourage the type of lunch counter tasting that many hurried people must settle for today. But the massive historical and theological learning of the author, the penetration of his observations, and his unwillingness to settle for easy conclusions make this one of the few really important introductions to the study of the Gospel of Mark.

W. A. QUANBECK

The Protestant Tradition. By J. S. Whale. Cambridge: The University Press, 1955. 360 pages. $3.75.

English Free Churchman, John Sheldon Whale, has been spending almost as much time in America lately as in his homeland. Not that we should complain! We are the richer for living in the area of his peregrinations, some of us in commuting distance from his lecture-stops: New York City, Austin, Texas, and Northfield, Minnesota (twice in two years!). The present volume, which is the September Religious Book Club selection, originated, in the main, from lectures delivered in 1953 at the Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Austin, Texas, and from six weeks of lectures on the campus of St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota. American Lutherans will be interested in his comment on the St. Olaf sojourn: "It was my first sustained contact with Lutheranism outside Germany; also my first sustained contact with Lutheran piety and liturgy which had originated in Scandinavia." Apparently he enjoyed the experience, for he concludes warmly: "May the 'Oles' ever flourish." And the Oles liked him; they and their friends in numbers over a thousand each night, flocked to his lecture-hall.

In the present volume Dr. Whale does two things: (1) he examines the roots of the Protestant tradition in Luther, Calvin, and the Sectarians; and (2) against this background, he faces three modern problems: religious toleration as posed by the doctrine and practice of the Roman Church, church-state relationships as posed by the modern "omnicompetent" state, and Christian reunion as posed by the divisions in the Catholic as well as the Protestant world.

One is impressed by the catholic sympathy which this author exhibits in his treatment of Luther, Calvin, and the Sectarians. By this I do not mean that there is a maudlin, uncritical adulation of these pioneers of the Protestant tradition, but rather that there is a discriminating appreciation. Whale makes no labored attempts to be a Lutheran at one moment, a Calvinist next, and then a Sectarian. Rather there is a natural communion with these spirits, an entering into their experiences and life under the Word. Out of this flow judgments made "from within" the minds of these original Protestants rather than coldly critical assessments made "from without" by a dispassionate, objective teacher of historical theology.

The approach to Luther is by the way of his emphasis on paradox: the paradox of Law and Gospel, the paradox of justification of the ungodly, the paradox of *"Gabe"* and *"Aufgabe,"* etc. This scheme for the interpretation of Luther (à la Holl, Elert, *et al*) leaves the Lutheran reader with the assurance that Father Martin has been fairly represented. I admit that once in a while I suspected him of making over-easy generalizations; but just when I was about to catch him in what I thought was culpable superficiality, he would pop up with supporting evidence. One exception, however, comes to mind. I wish the author had read all of Luther on Galatians rather than depending on R. S. Frank's quotation from the commentary. I think that Whale would then modify his interpretation of Luther's view of the Law (pp. 37-38).

Calvin's massive contribution to the Protestant tradition is subsumed under two headings, doctrine and churchmanship. The spelling-out of the former, instead of being a recapitulation of the *Institutes,* is done by discussing its two dominant motifs: biblicism and theocentricity. The interpretation of Calvin's churchmanship is made by examining what the various editions of the *Institutes* say about the doctrine of the church, concluding with this judgment: "Calvin's radical predestinarian faith declares that God alone is the source of our ultimate blessedness; yet in practice this is historically conditioned

by means of the fellowship and discipline of the Church" (p. 161).

With respect to the sect-type churches (using Troeltsch's familiar designation), Whale is quite aware of their weaknesses: a lack of a sense of tradition, a tendency to schism, a stubborn denial of the sacramental principle. However, at the same time the sectarians must be hailed as having bequeathed something positive to the modern world. This heritage is represented by certain enduring principles of Christian faith and discipleship which Whale describes as personal, voluntary, and spiritual.

In the closing part of the book, Whale gives a devastating critique of Romanism's ultramontanism. My favorite is the section called "Dogma as History," which includes Cardinal Manning's notorious justification for the decision of 1870: "dogma must overcome history." However, my enthusiasm was dampened a bit when I recognized pages 255-258 as "heavy borrowing" from Emil Brunner (*The Misunderstanding of the Church*) without due credit.

In the treatment of Luther on the church-state problem, Whale would have discovered new insights had he used the recent researches in this area by such men as Gustaf Törnvall, Walther Künneth, Helmut Thielecke, and the late Werner Elert.

The last chapter, on the ecumenical movement, is both inspiring and discerning. One is inspired by its vision and encouraged by its discernment. Occupying a central position in Whale's argument, incidentally, is the thesis that ecclesiology must be approached from Christology; that means to take the "new track" (Nygren at Evanston, 1954) which began at Lund in 1952.

Finally, a word about Whale's style. *The Protestant Tradition* represents theological writing at its best. How stolid and stodgy theologians can be! But not Whale. He writes with brilliance and imagination. He is an artist with words and the master of colorful phrases. All the while he is lucidly expounding his argument. Here is good writing. Read it and find out for yourself.

E. Clifford Nelson

A New Critique of Theoretical Thought. Vol. I: *The Necessary Presuppositions of Philosophy.* By Herman Dooyeweerd. Translated by David H. Freeman and William S. Young. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1953. 566 pages. $36.00 per set (4 vols.), sets only.

Every philosophy, if probed into thoroughly enough to reveal its basic presuppositions, will be seen to rest, consciously or unconsciously, on some religious conviction. Theoretically thought simply cannot be autonomous or religiously neutral. With these affirmations in mind, Prof. Dooyeweerd undertakes a vigorous criticism of much of western philosophy and attempts to show that the basic cleavage in philosophical thought is between Christian transcendentalism, on the one hand, and so-called immanence-philosophy, on the other. The former is based on the "Christian truths of faith." The latter, though pretending to be neutral and objective in its methods, rests on religious convictions of a secular-humanistic sort.

The present volume, translated from the Dutch, is the first in a set of four to be offered the English reader. The author, Herman Dooyeweerd, is professor of the philosophy of law in the Free University of Amsterdam. His thought, called the "Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea," is heralded in an accompanying brochure as having given rise to a new philosophical movement "represented throughout the world." It claims to give a truly Christian philosophy, unadulterated by any "apostate" motives.

Just how well Dooyeweerd succeeds in the positive task of presenting a philosophy which is genuinely "Christian" cannot be judged on the basis of Vol. I alone. Here his own views are given in bare outline only and his major endeavor is to prepare the ground by giving a critique of western philosophies from the transcendence standpoint. Volumes II and III promise to develop his thought in greater detail. Vol. IV will provide an index. There is enough, however, in the first volume of Dooyeweerd's views to indicate his basic presuppositions and, though not providing enough material

for an adequate appraisal, to suggest important questions with which the thoughtful reader may approach the further exposition of this philosophy.

The breadth and depth of Dooyeweerd's philosophical scholarship is evident throughout the work. Beginning with an introductory section entitled Prolegomena, in which the distinction between the immanence and transcendence viewpoints is first set forth, the author undertakes a detailed criticism of major figures and systems of thought. To mention only a few, Plato and Aristotle among the ancients, Thomas Aquinas in the Middle Ages, and Leibniz, Descartes, Hume, Kant, and Fichte among the moderns, are examined carefully in order to disclose their typical immanentism, or some accommodation to it, as in the case of Aquinas.

Characteristic of the immanence-standpoint, Dooyeweerd holds, is its dogmatic assumption that theoretical thought is autonomous and therefore independent of any supra-theoretical presuppositions. Human reason, in other words, is believed to be capable of pursuing truth in an impersonal, objective, and wholly disinterested way, without being biased by value-judgments or any religious orientation. The outcome, however, of such pretended neutrality is not the unprejudiced reflection which gives pure truth, but rather a masking of the thinker's own religious prejudices and the development of a set of philosophical ideas dominated by unbiblical motives. Thinking does not become truly critical until it searches deeply enough to disclose the religious ground-motive in every philosophy. Thus traditionally Kant's philosophy, for instance, has been called "critical," but actually it has not been critical enough, or, rather, the critical appraisal of it has not been thorough enough. This is evinced by the fact that Kant's religious ground-motive often has been misunderstood. Instead of being the Protestant philosopher of the evangelical idea of freedom, as has been alleged, Kant, captivated by the spirit of the Enlightenment, was motivated basically by the "humanistic ideal of personality." The biblical theocentric point of view can hardly find adequate expression in a philosophy which makes either the rational or the moral personality autonomous. Underlying all of Kant's reflections, therefore, claims Dooyeweerd, is a humanistic religion-ideal, not the authentic biblical view.

The autonomy of theoretical thought, the author argues, cannot provide an unproblematic starting-point for reflection. This becomes evident when it is seen that the dogma of autonomy is unable to explain the variety of philosophies which in one way or another adhere to it. Different systems, e.g., Aristotelian, Thomist, and Kantian (all of which assume theoretical thought to be autonomous) differ ultimately by virtue of their basic ground-motive which is "religious" in nature. In Western immanence-philosophy there have been three such motives: The Greek distinction of *form* and *matter,* the Scholastic *nature* and *grace* motive, and the humanistic motive of *nature* and *freedom.* Each of these presents antitheses or dialectical opposites which the respective philosophies try, though unsuccessfully, to bring into a theoretical synthesis. Actually the choice of ultimate standpoint and motive is a religious choice and involves the commitment of the total self which is doing the reflecting. Thus for a thinker to hold that reflective thought is self-sufficient and by itself the criterion of truth is really to transcend such thought and to affirm some supra-reflective position. Much of Catholic and Protestant thought, in seeking to accommodate itself to some form of immanentism (as, for example, Thomism to the philosophy of Aristotle), has tended to obscure and distort the insights of Christian faith.

Only a brief and superficial statement of Dooyeweerd's own "cosmonomic idea" can be given here. In essence, the cosmonomic principle means that the absolutely sovereign and holy will of God is the ultimate origin or cause of the temporal cosmos, and hence only in the divine will or Law is to be found the final principle of coherence which holds together in a radical unity the entire "divine world order." The world order has several aspects or "modal spheres" (the physical, psychological, etc.) each of which has its own set of laws, not reducible to the laws of any other aspect. Both the diversity and

the coherence of the temporal order point to a "totality" or "fullness of meaning" which can be grasped only in the religious relationship to God, the Sovereign Creator. This fulness of meaning is something toward which the "restlessness" of all Creation points, but it is not to be comprehended by any act of intellection. Rather, it is to be found only when "the heart, out of which are the issues of life" accepts Christ as the revelation of God and bows under the Creator's holy will. Achieving the true "Archimedian point in philosophy involves, therefore, a radical choice, in other words, it is a point which can be occupied only by the 'reborn self.'" Once this point is achieved, the thinker will realize that all theoretical thought is conditioned by the cosmic time-order and is under the ultimate Divine Law.

Dooyeweerd's argument, though often clear and persuasive, is more often cumbersome in expression, obscure, and very difficult to understand. Without prejudging the fuller exposition of his views, some fundamental questions may be raised. The most important of these concerns the relationship between philosophy and theology. Can there be a "Christian philosophy" which is distinct from Christian theology? Although Dooyeweerd today, unlike earlier, rejects the term "Calvinistic philosophy" as applying to his position, he does say that "this philosophy deserves to be called *Christian philosophy* without any further qualification," arguing at the same time that "philosophic thought cannot historically proceed from Luther but only from Calvin's point of departure." When, moreover, he says that Calvin was the *first* to formulate a purely biblical conception of the Law "in its origin, radical religious unity and temporal diversity," one is tempted to ask: "Where does confessional theology end and philosophy begin?" Acute and penetrating as are Dooyeweerd's criticisms of other points of view, is his own view really anything more than Calvinistic theology dressed up in philosophical garb? When one remembers that for Dooyeweerd all other philosophies are "immanence-views" or accommodations to immanentism and that he repudiates immanence-philosophy as essentially "apostate," is not the whole philosophical enterprise prejudged? Despite this, Dooyeweerd does not hesitate (inconsistently, I think) to say in the Foreword that "It has always been a law of human knowledge that the truth is gained only in the conflict of opinions."

The Lutheran reader will be quick to observe that Dooyeweerd, to use an expression of Brunner's concerning Calvin, "sails very near the wind in the dangerous matter of legalism." That this is so, is evident not only from his strong emphasis upon Law in the divine strategy, but also from his approval of Calvin's recognizing "the intrinsic subjection of the Christian to the decalogue" and from his assertion that Calvin enunciated a "purer position" with respect to Christian liberty than did Luther.

VILJO K. NIKANDER

The Faith that Rebels. By D. S. Cairns. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955. 260 pages, $3.

Not many theological books printed in 1928 bear reprinting in 1955. This one does, not only because its contribution to the study of the New Testament miracles is still significant, but also because it is a work of unusual spiritual power, eloquently projecting the faith and intensity of its author.

Cairns rejects the Modernist interpretation which accepts as genuine certain healing miracles but denies the historicity of the nature miracles. He criticizes its subservience to a materialistic metaphysic, its attempt to preserve the inner life as the realm of spirit, while turning the physical world over to science and causal laws, and its embarrassed equivocation in its handling of the resurrection narrative. The traditional interpretation of miracles, which accepts their genuineness but relegates them to the margin of Jesus' life by treating them only as evidence for his divinity, is also dismissed as inadequate. Cairns contends for an understanding of the miracles which will take seriously not only their historicity, but their proper place in the ministry of Jesus.

The miracles are an essential part of Jesus' redemptive work, showing forth God's will to end the ravages of disease and evil and restore conditions pleasing to him. They

are performed by Jesus as Son of Man, by the power of God given him in response to prayer and are largely dependent on faith for their efficacy. Cairns stresses three aspects of miracle very strongly; the presence of the Spirit's power in the working of miracle, the centrality of faith and the necessity of believing prayer. He contends that religious movements which stress faith healing are emphasizing a legitimate part of the Christian heritage and are a reproach to the weak faith of many churchmen. The miracles of Jesus as manifestations of divine power are not given only for one generation but are indications of God's will to overcome disease and restore soundness in all succeeding generations.

More recent studies in biblical theology support Cairns' contention that the miracles are an essential part of the ministry of Christ, and also give a more correct perspective to their evidential character as maintained by the traditional view. They also underline the insistence that the miracles indicate that the powers of the new age are present in Jesus Christ. At the same time a new appreciation of the eschatological element in the Gospels would set limiting factors which Cairns ignores. His thought is still too much within the framework of philosophical idealism to do full justice to the eschatological dynamism of the Bible. At the same time it should be acknowledged that the enduring value of this book as a witness to the meaning of the miracles is only possible because the author had grasped the message of the Scriptures and thus to some extent had already transcended the philosophical framework of idealism. In this respect he was a notable pioneer, and it would be ungracious to reproach him for not having been further in advance of his generation.

W. A. Quanbeck

The New Bible: Pro and Con. By William Carey Taylor. New York: Vantage Press, Inc., 1955. 351 pages. $3.50.

The New Bible is, of course, the Revised Standard Version; the author is a Southern Baptist missionary in Brazil. Twenty-three pages of the analysis are Pro; the rest is Con. The final verdict: "rightness in many minor points, . . . wrongness and sometimes wrongheadedness that mar . . . many, many of the most vital Scriptures. The RSV as one of many study Bibles on your desk will be a help; but as a Bible for public worship it will prove a calamity and an apostasy from the Word of God" (p. 351).

The style is brief paragraphs (e.g., "Salvation by the Maternity Ward?" for I Tim. 2:15), arranged loosely under twenty-four chapter headings. Old and New Testaments are both ransacked for examples. Sources used are not parochial; *The Lutheran* is twice cited (pp. 330, 332), and Elson Ruff quoted, slightly out of context, in behalf of an "I-Thou" Bible! Lutherans will also note Ralph Heim's *Harmony of the Gospels* is preferred over the "crooked *Gospel Parallels*, the Official Disharmony . . . of the Union-Harvard-Yale axis committee" (pp. 217 ff.). Prejudices vary; RSV is censured for introducing "homosexual" and "race" into its translation (p. 181), but also for "the squeamishness of prissiness" at Matt. 24:8 (p. 282); and Bible-burning is deplored because it embarrasses missionaries in Brazil (p. v). Some statements are inaccurate, like that on Mark 15:39, "Eberhard Nestle shows his faith by printing both *Son* and *God* with capital letters, in Greek" (p. 121; confused with Mark 15:26?). And the rumor about Frederick C. Grant's death (p. 321), like Mark Twain's obituary, is greatly exaggerated!

People set against the New Bible will find here much grist for the mill, though an index of passages discussed would help them; others will find some wheat among the chaff.

John Reumann

Christian Deviations. By Horton Davies. New York: Philosophical Library, 1954. 126 pages. $2.75.

The multiplicity of denominations and sects competing for the loyalties of modern man creates considerable confusion and doubt. This book attempts to provide some guidance in this situation. It discusses Theosophy, Christian Science, Seventh-Day Adventism, Moral Rearmament, Jehovah's Witnesses, Open-Air Religion, The Mormons, British Israel, Astrology, and Spiritism. The point

of view is that of the central tradition of Protestant Christianity. The author does not give details as to his sources, and the brief bibliography consists mainly of secondary and popular works. His portrayal of the various religious groups is fairly accurate, and his comparisons with the Protestant tradition strike the central notes of the evangelical position. Unfortunately he betrays a lack of sympathy and at times an irritation with the movements he discusses. Furthermore, he tends to harp on the moral failings of some of the founders and leaders of the sects. The book's value is probably that of providing polemical ammunition for the convinced Protestant rather than helping the earnest seeker for the truth who is confused by the babel of conflicting claims. But even for the convinced Protestant the book is priced too high.

Stolen Legacy. By George G. M. James. New York: Philosophical Library, 1954. 190 pages. $3.75.

In view of the large amounts of pernicious nonsense written about white supremacy and superiority, one can hardly resent a book which urges the claims of black superiority in the same way. The thesis of this book is that the cultural achievements which have for two thousand years been credited to the Greeks are really the work of the people of North Africa. The Greeks simply appropriated them without acknowledgment and until the present work of literary detection their theft has gone unnoticed. Resentful of the smug superiority of the white races, the author seeks to demonstrate its false foundations, and at the same time provide the basis for cultural pride to a people long accustomed to being treated as backward or inferior. He argues his case with considerable indignation, some fragments of learning and an intensity which disregards the demands of argument and logic. Historical fact is mingled with over-confident conjecture in a way that would be comic were it not for the pathos which informs the book. That the Greeks learned from their neighbors hardly any informed person today would doubt, but the determination of the extent of their debt requires more attention to history and a calmer and more objective spirit than is evident here. That the Egyptian cultural tradition had great values of its own is being recognized with increasing appreciation today. And that the notions of racial superiority are not only snobbish and silly, but vicious and destructive, is being recognized today even by people with white skins. Accompanied by a sound historical discipline the energy and moral ardor that produced this book would be much more admirable, and more readable.

The New Testament in Cadenced Form. Designed by Morton C. Bradley, Jr. New York: Rinehart & Co., 1954. 675 pages. $5.

What is new and different about this edition of the New Testament is the typographical treatment. The text is that of the King James version, but instead of being set in the customary form of prose, sentences are divided into units or cadences. Each cadence is set on a separate line, and the relation of these lines to one another is visually indicated by various indentations and leadings. The purpose is "to help the reader grasp the meaning, the emotional content, and the beauty of each unit." Example:

> "But Peter took him up,
> saying,
> Stand up;
> I myself also am a man.
> And as he talked with him,
> he went in and found many. . . ."

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